innisherald

VOLUME 60 EDITION 3.
FEBRUARY 14, 2025

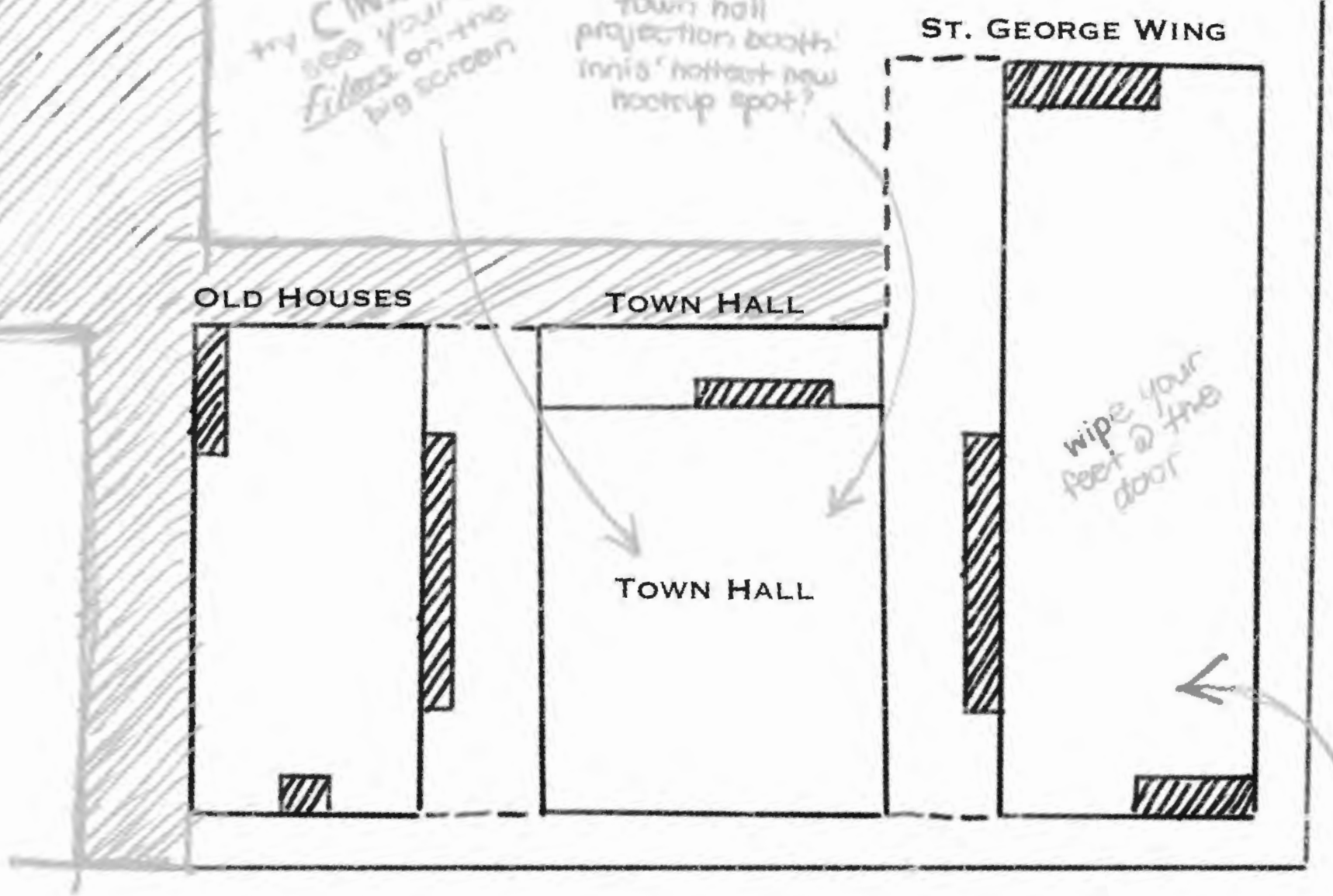
construction! helmet on @ all times

welcome to hell.

Innis College

try CIN213 to see your fave films on the big screen

town hall projection booth: innis' hottest new hookup spot?



parking...

where the magic happens (Herald meeting room)

V60 2024–25

The Innis Herald Masthead

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Marty Hewitt
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A. W. Jenkins
Suraiya Jiwani
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Jai Mann
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The Innis Herald acknowledges this land on which both the University of Toronto and Innis College operate. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, it is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in and on Tkaronto.

letter to/from the editor

dear readers,
happy new year and happier newest Herald.

to the returning and the newcoming Herald apologists and appreciators alike, welcome back to *The Innis Herald*. it is a pleasure for the both of us to enter 2025, and it is with great pleasure that I present to you v60e3.

to start off this special issue released on this pseudospecial day, here are some words we received from a community member:

dear herald, how the fuck does one find love in this day and age? where are people meeting all their significant others? do you, as an all-knowing newspaperish entity, have any advice on how to start dating without the apps? asking for a friend of course.

good news! we at the Herald are celebrating this time of adoration and affection by gifting this paper themed around ***romanticisation*** for everyone to enjoy, the taken and the not-so-taken. cheers to celebrating love, or lack thereof, i guess! happens to the best of us.

as this first page comes to its end, let us turn to the rest of the pages. from poetry to satire to reviews to essays, i hope you enjoy the lovely pieces we have in store. let these subsequent pages remind you, through the creating and consuming of art, that life is beautiful, and love is all around. yes, even for newspaper contributors, artists, and writers. hard to believe, i know.

as always: hot people read the *Herald*, hotter people contribute to the *Herald*, and the hottest people run the *Herald*.

xoxo,
samantha “sam” guevara

The Innis Mosaic (Democrussy 2)

Yash Kumar Singhal & Samantha "Sam" Guevara

INNIS LIFE

Earlier this year, the Innis College Student Society (ICSS) held its Annual General Meeting (AGM). We sat through all three hours of it, so you did not have to. Here are our highlights:

- The 2025 edition of the ICSS AGM was off to a great start. As expected, most students were there for the food and not the event itself. Maybe even the reporters of this piece.
- From the get-go, the ICSS President—Jamie—was stressed.
- Seated to the left of Yash, our Managing Editor, is Sam, our Editor-in-Chief, browsing Hinge. Sophia, a Residence Don, seated across from the two asks her neighbour, "Wait, what is the patriarchy?" The person sitting behind them is watching a lecture on YouTube. Yash lets out a sigh of relief. Innis College's student democracy is in good hands.
- As expected, the three Comp Sci students, Elsie, Ron, and Jamie (our VP Internal, honourary Innisan and vote counter, and President, respectively) have digitised the voting system. QR codes and online polls? What happened to good old-fashioned shouting and hand-raising? *That* is true democracy. *That* is why the *Herald* attended.
- "I'm just here to instigate," says Sam. "We know," responds Jamie. This was proven true seconds later when Jamie moved on to the next slide and Sam immediately said, "Me when I use ChatGPT to write my motions." Yes, Jamie was evidently offended. And yes, Sam laughed at her own joke.
- "5 plus 1 is 6 people," Jamie clarifies to a confused audience.
- The President's remarks were succinct but inspiring. For reference, his whole speech was: "We're doing great :D" (Yup, that was it. Those words and emoticon were taken from the presentation slide verbatim).
- All within a second: Jamie drops his bottle at the podium. Meme, Grad Rep, has an alarm going off. Sam is reapplying her lip liner with one hand and seconding a motion with the other. So much is happening.
- Jamie abruptly shouts at Leon (First Year Representative - Other Residence), "Where do you live?" Now we all know he lives in Wetmore.
- "I wanna motion to put this in, who wants to second," heard for the tenth time. "That's what she said," also heard for the tenth time.
- Some motions that were passed:
  - » Execs will not be awarded honoraria by default and a council voting process will determine if they deserve it
  - » Breakfast Club has been codified as a mandatory ICSS service.
  - » The Cinema Studies Student Union will now be guaranteed to get 8k a year instead of 2/45ths of the ICSS budget. Whatever that means. They must show up to budget meetings though to describe their planned expenditures because "We want to make sure CINSSU is not spending 8k on cigarettes" - Jamie
  - » Orientation Coordinators now receive $5k instead of $3.5k. Overhead as soon as this motion got passed: "See how nobody had a complaint about this motion?" - Sam, the most recent OC "Maybe it's because you're making all the comments" - Kyle
  - » The Prez will now liaise with World University Service of Canada (WUSC).
  - » The ICSS formal is now a mandatory annual project.

On a more serious note, for those of you who want to read through the notes and review all of the motions discussed, visit https://innisicss.ca. The information above in this article was a curated collection created by us.

By the end, the final words on record by Jamie were, "Don't add this to the Herald" followed by "I will lock all of the doors and make sure none of you go home" (Sure, this last statement may have been taken out of context, but such is the nature of the mosaic).

The Herald readers deserve full transparency so we will have you know that we called Jamie to fact-check a point and the Prez ignored our call. When he finally returned it, he said, and we quote: "I am not endorsing this, so I am not providing a comment. You drama queens do whatever you want."

Obviously, the ~~Herald~~ (Yash and Sam) have done whatever we want. Xoxo, The Innis Herald. *A burden to the ~~ICSS~~ (Jamie), now and forever.*

P.S., even though I say we as a society should impeach you every other day, I could not ask for a better ICSS Prez to annoy or a better ICSS AGM to heckle at. -Sam

to our beloved,

herald, He must have predestined this.

we never saw this coming, but after many hours of prayer, we think it's time to take the next step... will you accept this promise ring from us? with this ring, we promise to maybe at one point get engaged in the eventual future. until that glorious covenant is sealed, we promise to like like you from a safe, chaste distance.

do you accept our promise ring?

YES or NO

(circle one)

yours in faith,

the gargoyle xo

The Innis Mosaic

In the 70s, the Innis Mosaic was a way for the Herald community to share their thoughts or stories across the college and campus from confessions to updates, if not bar recommendations.

As of 2025, here is what we have to say...

Jamie: "Have you ever gone in a closet and turned the light off? It's like a sensory deprivation chamber, it's amazing." Concern from staff and students alike filled the air. *That's our Innis College Student Society president, by the way.*

Innis College's newest makeout spot: The ICSS closet. It is like a clown car the way I saw 6 people walk out of the room one after another.

"The more words in a Letterboxd review, the less I care about it." sam's showtime schedule in shambles.

Trudeau resigning was bittersweet. Sweet cause nobody liked the guy. Bitter cause now we don't have anyone else to hate anymore.

"Lately I've been getting really into applesauce." "Old age hit you like a train, huh?"

"Has anyone here seen a tree, in practice?" —Math 344 prof at 9 am in the morning, met with a bunch of confused faces and eerie silence

Out of nowhere, Don Sophia says, "WAIT. WHAT IS THE PATRIARCHY?" *She was overheard saying this not once, but twice, in two separate conversations, by the way.*

The Arbor Room's raspberry croissants are so good they made me wish I had a dick so I could bust a nut whenever I take a bite.

Megalopolis: Don't Let the Now Destroy the Forever

Marty Hewitt
ARTS & CULTURE

On October 19, 2024, I saw *Megalopolis* in theatres for the third time. My friend from high school had come to see the movie in one of only four theatres in Canada showing the film. On our way, he asked me a difficult question: "what is *Megalopolis* about?" It is difficult to explain why, despite having seen it twice already, I didn't know. We saw it that afternoon, and I would go on to see *Megalopolis* two more times before it went out of theatres. Despite all of this, I still don't have a good answer to his question. There is something utterly baffling about *Megalopolis*, something indescribable, which makes it unlike anything I have seen. This question is still unanswered in my mind, and my five theatre viewings brought with them only more questions. Why did I spend over $100 on tickets for this? What is the miracle substance Megalon? And, most importantly, what were they thinking when they made this movie? In the following article, I will try and fail to answer these questions.

Megalopolis had a troubled development. The film was envisioned by director Francis Ford Coppola in the late 1970s, and was developed over the course of the following decades. Coppola had gained fame as a filmmaker through projects such as *The Godfather* and *Apocalypse Now*, widely regarded as masterpieces. He intended *Megalopolis* to draw comparison between ancient Rome and modern America, to give commentary on the development of empires through time. He worked on the project on and off for the next few decades, only beginning production seriously in 2001. Progress, however, halted after the September 11 attacks, due to plans for the film to include a scene in which much of downtown New York is destroyed by debris falling from the sky. Production for the film was essentially cancelled, and it appeared that the movie would not be made.

Throughout these many years, Coppola's wife Eleanor had been a major creative collaborator. When her health began to deteriorate throughout the 2010s, Coppola returned to the project. He had previously been unable to secure Hollywood funding, but he was able to capitalize on the success of his wine business and self-finance the film for 120 million dollars. Production of *Megalopolis* was rushed as he attempted to finish the movie before Eleanor's death in 2024. I do not know if she was able to see *Megalopolis* before it was completed, but the film is dedicated to her memory.

The production of *Megalopolis* is suggestive of the film itself. The story has the grandeur and complexity to match the decades of development which had been dedicated to the project, but the execution of these ideas is generally scatterbrained and rushed. The themes are truly massive in scope, but so bloated and unwieldy as to be impossible for presentation in a theatrical runtime. There is also the ugly side of the *Megalopolis* production, with allegations of sexual harassment against Coppola on set, and accounts of a poor working environment among crew members. While I do not know the full story of *Megalopolis*' production, a certain picture begins to emerge through these accounts. Coppola is a flawed person, having lost much of his old skill in filmmaking – however, I cannot help but see the artistic vision deep at the heart of this film. *Megalopolis* is not a magnum opus, crafted by a talented filmmaker in their prime. It is a strange movie made by a sleazy Italian man trying to recapture his genius of four decades prior, a last-ditch attempt to give his wife this film before she died. The reality is that *Megalopolis* is not a masterpiece, nor is it total garbage, but instead a complex blend of both. The beauty of *Megalopolis* is that it tries and fails to accomplish something impossible.

> "The beauty of *Megalopolis* is that it tries and fails to accomplish something impossible."

I was inspired to write this article after having seen that some contributors and masthead members of the Innis Herald feel negatively about *Megalopolis*. Objectively speaking, they are correct. By any measure, *Megalopolis* is *terrible*. It is probably the worst movie I have ever seen. The plot is nonsensical, the acting is completely disjointed, and the visual effects budget appears to dry up about forty minutes in. Despite all of this, there is something almost magical in this film which is impossible to describe. There are fragments, glimpses of moments, which contain true beauty; concepts of hope which are so genuine, images which are so beautiful, that I cannot believe this film is without merit. It is as if Francis Ford Coppola had fed a beautiful film into a wood chipper and then blown the bits across some other dogshit he had slapped together. *Megalopolis* is a terrible movie by any measure, but it is more than that. It is an attempt by an artist to communicate a view of the world – Coppola's love letter to his dying wife. Buried in this movie, below the strange Aubrey Plaza sex scenes (plural) and the Emersonian dialogue, there are glimpses of a true masterpiece. Beyond this, the moments of contrast between beauty and garbage in this film make for the most hilarious cinema I have ever seen. If you haven't seen *Megalopolis*, don't listen to the detractors. Do not let criticism deny you the chance to love this film. Do not let the derision and ridicule turn you away from the chance to enjoy a work of art. In the words of Cesar Catalina, "Don't let the now destroy the forever."

Cinema Studies Student Requests Bereavement Leave After David Lynch's Passing

Robbie Janzen
SATIRE

THE BOUNDARY

The recent passing of David Lynch has affected members of our community in different ways. Some have posted a tribute on Instagram and then moved on with their day, while others have watched one of his disturbing films to reflect on the memories he gave them. One young man, however, is taking the news harder than most.

Innis College cinema studies student Jack McLachlan has requested bereavement leave from classes for the next week while dealing with Lynch's death. "You really can't describe how much his movies have affected me." While dabbing his eyes with a tissue over a plate of cherry pie and a cup of black coffee, McLachlan said, "When I first saw *Eraserhead*, I had to watch it five times in a row, and I would have watched it more if my awful parents hadn't unplugged the router to stop me. No piece of media had ever spoken to me like that before. How can the university expect me to go to school after such devastating news?" McLachlan's love for Lynch is so great that he claims to have shown the erotic thriller *Blue Velvet* to every first date he's had. "Sure, all of them ghosted, but that's a blessing in disguise. I don't want someone as intellectually deficient as they are. I deserve a big-brained (and big-breasted) woman." When asked if they were considering McLachlan's request, several Cinema Studies Institute professors responded, "Wait, he was serious?"

As a further tribute, McLachlan has taken up smoking in order to, like Lynch, eventually develop emphysema. "I want more than anything to know what it was like to be him. How can I expect to do that if I'm not suffering the way he did? Not until I'm hooked up to an oxygen tube will he and I finally be one."

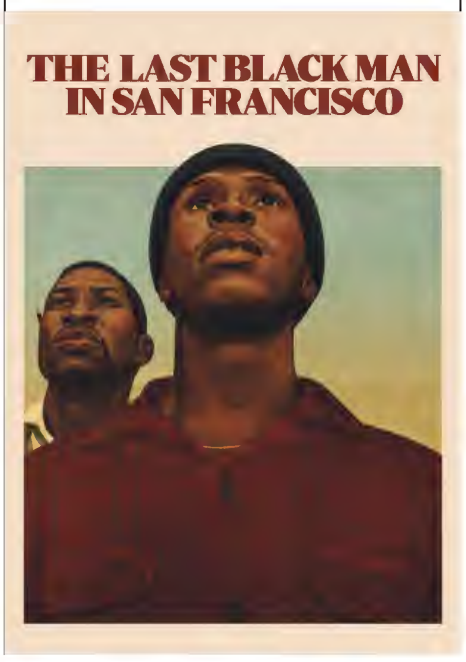
SAM's SHOWTIME SCHEDULE

Samantha "Sam" Guevara
Editor-in-Chief & Film Columnist

Sure, it may be a time where affection and admiration is in the air and the world may seem to revolve around romance. However, it is also important to recognise an underrated aspect of human connection: platonic relationships. Without further ado, a movie critic (*avid Letterboxd user*) and a film scholar (*undergraduate with a Cinema Studies minor*), presents the eleventh issue of this column: FRIENDSHIPS IN FILMS.

***THE LAST BLACK MAN IN SAN FRANCISCO* (2019)**
Dir. Joe Talbot

"Let us give each other the courage to see beyond the stories we were born into!"



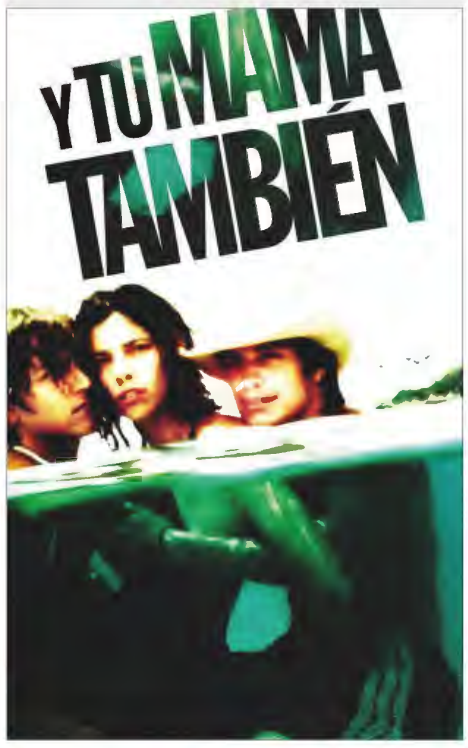
***NICKEL BOYS* (2024)**
Dir. RaMell Ross

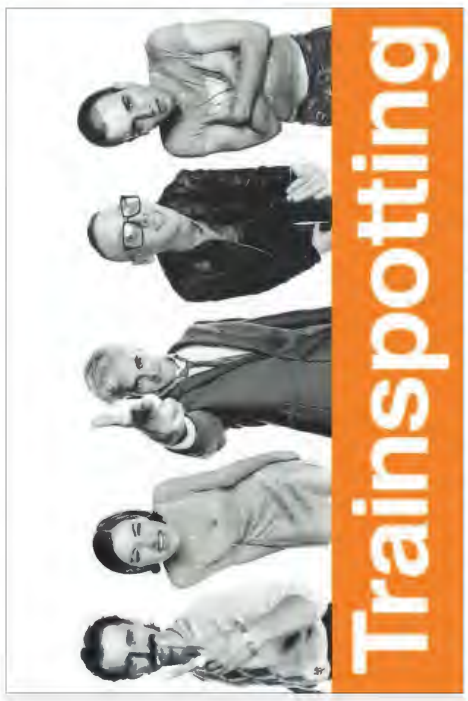
"What happened to that one kid you used to hang with all the time?"

An adaptation of the 2019 novel, and 2020 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, by Colson Whitehead with the same name, *Nickel Boys* follows chronicles inspired by the abusive and brutal Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys, a historic reformatory. Meet Elwood, whose college dreams are collapsed once sentenced to a cruel penal institution in the Jim Crow South named Nickel Academy, where he builds a powerful friendship with Turner—a fellow Black teenager—as the two traverse the trials and tribulations of reform school together in Florida. Strikingly shot mostly in first-person point-of-view to tell the tale, *Nickel Boys* is transcendentally bold and radical in everything it attempts, and achieves, through brilliant and delicate tackling and blending of perspective with time.

***Y TU MAMÁ TAMBIÉN/AND YOUR MOTHER, TOO* (2001)**
Dir. Alfonso Cuarón

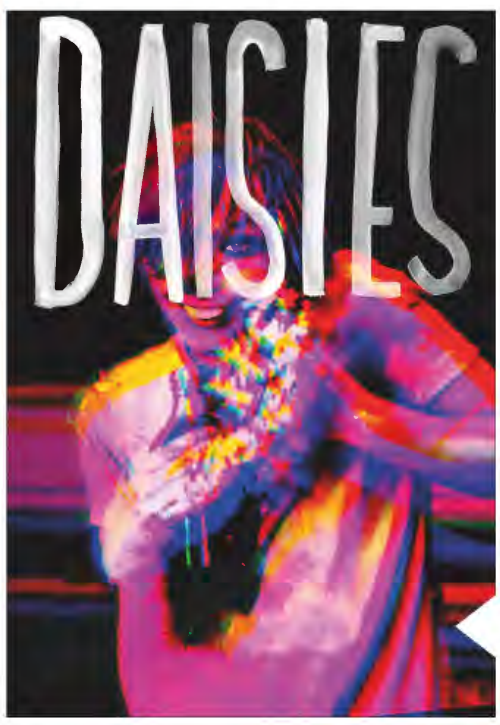
"Life is like the foam, so give yourself away like the sea"





***TRAINSPOTTING* (1996)**
Dir. Danny Boyle

"After all, we're not fucking stupid. At least, we're not that fucking stupid."



***SEDMIKRÁSKY/DAISIES* (1966)**
Dir. Věra Chytilová

"So, what can you do?"
"Nothing, really."

A surrealist arthouse comedy hailed as a Czechoslovak New Wave cult classic and an experimental landmark of feminist filmmaking, *Daisies* follows two young women who believe the whole world is spoiled, and decide to also become entirely consumed by hedonism. Meet Marie I and Marie II who team up together to construct a friendship centring on playing tricks on and rebelling against both men in public and materialism in society, as the duo willingly drown themselves in debauched destruction and cheerfully partake in gladful gluttony. Anarchic in style and intense through performance, *Sedmikrásky* is a visually enthralling bizarre social commentary that is bright, bold, colourful, and chaotic.

***THELMA & LOUISE* (1991)**
Dir. Ridley Scott

"Let's keep goin'."
"What d'you mean?"

Successful Failure under *The Breaking Ice*

Shawn He

ARTS & CULTURE

燃冬 (Ran Dong) is the original Chinese name of *The Breaking Ice,* a 2023 Chinese-Singaporean film directed by Anthony Chen and starring Zhou Dongyu, Liu Haoran, and Qiu Chuxiao. It literally translates to "burning winter."

To me, this translation encapsulates the film, which if I had to use one word to describe would be "unexpected."

My motivation to watch this film is unexpected in and of itself: I saw the trailer on YouTube and on the thumbnail are three attractive Asian people wrapped around each other in a tight embrace. Immediately, I was drawn in. It seemed like a very dramatic and thrilling Asian romance story; the scenes in the trailer of the three people dancing and looking sad emphasize this impression.

I put the movie on my watchlist immediately but for a variety of reasons I did not get to watch it until months after. And even when I did get to watch it, I couldn't finish it in one sitting and had to watch it multiple times. You might reasonably then ask, "Why are you writing about a film that you had to watch in multiple sittings to finish?" And it's because the film left a lasting impression on me: it chose to be something totally different from what I expected.

From the trailer and poster, *The Breaking Ice* seems like a very dramatic and scandalous movie, and at times it is, but it is also the complete opposite. This becomes apparent right at the start, as Haofeng, a finance bro from Shanghai and one of the film's three protagonists, is at a friend's wedding in Harbin, China. What is supposed to be a joyous and celebratory moment is instead quite a depressing one, as Haofeng stares sullenly at the couple and the people celebrating. One of the other guests at his table tries to cheer him up and get him to join everyone dancing, and he does so reluctantly. Haofeng's behaviour and mood immediately show me that this movie is going to be depressing as hell, but it also sets up a mystery: why is he so sad and depressed at what is supposed to be a happy moment for him and his friends?

This question is subsequently both answered and made more mysterious, as he leaves the venue to answer a call about missing a therapy appointment, to which he replies that they have called the wrong number. Haofeng then contemplates jumping off the balcony he is on. At this point, I wondered where exactly this story is headed. I knew it was going to be depressing before watching, but where's the romance that the trailer promised? In a way, it is left behind when Haofeng leaves the wedding to go outside alone, and that could also likely be the end of his story. But this is an hour-and-a-half movie and a tour bus rolling up right under Haofeng prevents him from jumping to his death.

Additionally, the tour guide on the bus catches his eye. It is the film's female protagonist, Nana. She is essentially the thread that ties the characters together, and her character arc is also the one that I think is done the best out of the three protagonists. Her introduction to the story involves Haofeng attending one of the tours of Harbin she is guiding. I thought this was quite stalkerish but a lot of rom-coms are, so I tried to keep an open mind.

During the day, Nana is a happy and enthusiastic tour guide—no, not really. This is the image she presents to Haofeng and others, and she can recognize Haofeng's inner sadness because she herself has it too. Nana's external positivity is a persona she holds up both for her occupation and to hide the trauma and pain caused by her past: she used to be a figure skater but ran away from her old life and loved ones after suffering a career-breaking injury.

Nana is very jaded and cynical, and her relationship with Han Xiao, an employee and cook at one of the restaurants Nana brings Haofeng to after her tour ends, highlights this underlying aspect of her personality. Xiao is the film's third protagonist, and it is made obvious that he desires Nana's romantic affection, inviting her to dinner and awkwardly denying that he wants to confess his love to her when questioned.

With the introductions of all the main characters, I thought to myself, *the love triangle is finally set up!* Haofeng and Xiao are both romantically interested in Nana; Nana has known Xiao longer but appears to have more interest in Haofeng, the newcomer. Who will she choose?

The dinner scene begins hilariously awkward, as Nana invites Haofeng to her dinner with Xiao. What was supposed to be a one-on-one dinner between Nana and Xiao turns into a three-way staredown. Xiao is understandably caught off guard, but after getting to know Haofeng a little, he starts to like him, and the awkwardness is washed away with the help of food and alcohol.

The unexpected resolution to this sequence of events is a pattern throughout the movie: the characters have a plan, and something goes wrong, but there's a resolution where everything ends up alright.

The Breaking Ice thus has a simple message about change. At its core, the film is about accepting change even if doing so hurts immensely – because what happens can't be changed, but you can change how you respond to it.

The film communicates this message through the lives of the three protagonists, who all have different dreams that they fail to achieve and who try to cope by never changing.

Nana suffers an injury that ruins her figure skating career and gives up on it entirely in turn.

After flunking out in school, Xiao comes to work in his aunt's restaurant in Harbin but wants to leave and travel to find a way to succeed on his own. He never does so though because he is scared of leaving the security in his current life and potentially failing to succeed on his own. Xiao's pursuit of Nana's love is just an excuse to hide his fear; when he catches her and Haofeng sleeping together, he is unfazed, because he realizes that he does not really love her in that way.

And Haofeng's failure in life is – ironically – his inability to end it. All his attempts to commit suicide fail because of his friends. Haofeng's continuous failure to end his life communicates that he doesn't really want to die, but more importantly, that when something doesn't work or succeed, you can't be stubborn – you have to attempt something different. Life can be very difficult and require hard sacrifices, but it can also reveal things that your original plan cannot.

Their adventure to see Heaven Lake, a gigantic lake in a volcanic crater, embodies this unexpected success produced by diverting from the plan. The three of them drive to an off-road trail and, after hours of hiking, are finally almost at the lake – when Nana receives a call from a mountain ranger on her walkie-talkie that there is a blizzard coming to their location and they need to head back immediately.

Haofeng is very disappointed, as the trip was his, and he probably thought that seeing the vast lake in person would help stop his suicidal ideations. Unable to reach the lake, he tells his companions that he needs to go pee and heads off into the woods, stopping before a cliff where he plans to jump off.

This is quite a turn of events from what I expected: a beautiful shot of the three characters against the backdrop of the lake, displaying humanity's insignificance against the incomprehensible vastness of nature as they tearfully embrace.

Instead, I got a CGI bear, which is more than enough to compensate.

Nana yelling his name draws Haofeng back from his death to the main trail, and he runs back to find a bear looming before his two friends. The bear approaches closer and Nana, like a Disney princess, reaches out her hand to the bear's head. The bear receives her touch and then walks away.

This interaction may seem very unrealistic – and it is – but the film foreshadows it a lot with bear motifs in previous scenes and a story Haofeng tells on the way to the lake. Ignoring how the bear did not bite Nana's hand off, this scene does achieve the inspiration of nature that Haofeng desired, just in an unexpected form for both the characters and the audience. Even though the characters technically fail in their goal, I wouldn't say that their trip was a failure; its success just came in an unexpected, ursine form.

I won't spoil the ending of the film, but based on what I have discussed, you can make a guess on whether there's a happy ending for the characters. To be honest, I don't really know myself, as the ending is quite vague, but I will say that it is on the optimistic side.

Even though the plot consistently surprised me with the direction it chose, I always felt a reassurance that the characters would end up okay. The film consistently communicates that people should not be scared by the unexpected but instead embrace and adapt to it. That is the "burning winter" in the film for me, a desire that's been covered underneath and melts away the coldness.

There's a phrase Haofeng repeats throughout the film like a mantra: "Find somewhere, close your eyes, and then..."

He doesn't finish what he is going to say. It's up to you to decide where to go.

Ambitious Sci-Fi Epic or Hidden Romance Classic: *Mr. Nobody*'s (2009) Decisions

Personal reflections on the last January FFF

Burak Batu Tunçel

ARTS & CULTURE

> "Cinema doesn't change anything; but it makes people understand many things. It is not the movies that will change the world, but the people who watch those movies."
>
> Krzysztof Kieślowski

still from Mr. Nobody *(2009)*

The year was 2016. I saw a film. I had just finished that year's English language examination, led by people who were coming to my school in Istanbul all the way from Cambridge. There was a small room inside the school building called the "Film Room." It would only be open on special days and occasions. In my memory, I have only been there two times – this time being one of them. Maybe to reward us, one of our teachers had opened the room and allowed the kids to pick a film which had been downloaded to her computer. The film had already started when I came in. I asked a friend what the title was, and he said, "something called *Mr. Nobody.*" Then for the remainder of the following two hours, I sat there amazed at what I was seeing. None of us in that room understood *all* of what was happening. But things were happening on the screen. Things I felt were important. Things which would shape my life and love of cinema.

Since then, I have seen *Mr. Nobody* three times – all during very important moments in my life. Its flaws became more clear in each viewing, but so did its philosophy and emotional core.

Mr. Nobody is the story of Nemo – which means "nobody" in Latin. He is the last mortal person on Earth, in the year 2092. The now immortal mankind awaits his natural death while a psychiatrist and a journalist try to penetrate the memories of this mysterious man. But his claims are contradictory and seem to indicate that several lifetimes have happened all in one.

At nine, he is a kid at a train station who needs to make the most important decision of his life. As a result of his parents' divorce, his mother is already on the train – leaving their town for the city, while his father means to stay. Who should Nemo go with?

Because angels had forgotten to erase his memory of the future while being born, he has the ability to see his multiple futures. However, the knowledge of all these possibilities makes it even more difficult to make decisions. Alongside the protagonist, the audience travels with Nemo through space and time (literally) to observe where his decisions might take him.

Belgian director Jaco Van Dormael's take on chance and possibilities is nothing short of ambitious. While watching the film, you definitely get the feeling that this screenplay took a lot of time to develop. In fact, the very roots of this project are embedded in a short film he made in 1982. The narrative feeds on popular theories about concepts like the butterfly effect, Schrödinger's cat, chaos theory, etc. It doesn't expect you to know these, and even if you do, the narrative still goes on to explain them for the audience – which is one of the reasons why people can be taken aback by the film. It is very heavy on its themes, and it really seems to want viewers to take them in – so much so that it sometimes borders on spoon-feeding. Yet, there still is more than meets the eye here.

Films about multiple realities caused by different decisions have existed for a while before *Mr. Nobody* came on board. The earliest example would probably be Kieslowski's rather political *Blind Chance* (1987), where the three possible futures of a Polish medical student are presented in an episodic structure. Then came *Sliding Doors* in 1998, a banal romcom framed in an interesting way about a woman experiencing two alternative realities, one in which she lives in ignorance of her lover's unfaithfulness and one where she finds herself another love interest.

It can be argued that there's an evolution in how this concept has been tackled over the years. In all three films, it doesn't seem a coincidence the locations where the alternative realities start to manifest themselves are railroad stations: places of exchange and travel. Hitchcock similarly had used the train station as an integral part of *Strangers on a Train*'s themes of exchange. Yet, they all serve different purposes. Kieslowski's observations on Polish society's relationship with left-wing politics doesn't have much to do with Gwenyth Palthrow's love life, but this shift of focus seems to be integral in how *Mr. Nobody* came to be.

One of the reasons why this film is compelling to me relates purely to its emotional appeal. It's striking how the film centers the multiverse narrative around love, but without falling for the same trap that *Sliding Doors* did by making caricatures of love interests. The film uses this unique structure to explore different kinds of love. Even though this is overtly a science fiction film, it works even better as a romance. There's a shot where child Nemo passes by the three girls from his neighborhood sitting next to each other, all of which fall in love with Nemo in different alterations of the future. The colors they wear are also colors that are purposefully implemented in their segments; they represent their personalities.

Jean wears yellow and her segments are also color-graded in yellow. She loves Nemo unconditionally, and they end up being rich and successful in the future. Yet, Nemo seems depressed in this dream life of wealth and health. Thus, yellow becomes the color of a life of luxury.

Maybe the most complex character here, Elise is seen in a blue dress. She is established as a frustrated teen, who loves a man that doesn't love her back. So, she ends up with Nemo. Even though she is loved and cared for by Nemo and her kids, she is still haunted by regrets. She contemplates what her life could have been if she hadn't been married. While Nemo's lack of decision allows the viewers to voyeuristically travel through different possible features, the sense of regret is thrown aback. Elise balances that out, as she is a woman haunted by these choices. This is a life which wants her, but that she doesn't want. She can't love Nemo back in the way that he loves her. This subverts the reality with Jean. There, Nemo is loved but he himself cannot love. Here, Nemo loves truthfully but Elise can't love him. That is why her world and clothes are presented in the sorrowful blue.

Finally, there's Anna. She seems to be the key of the narrative in many ways. A love so impossibly true that even the universe seems to be trying so hard not to let it happen. Such a massive deus ex machina like a raindrop ruining the paper Nemo's holding where her phone number's written is ridiculous – but romanticism often comes in extravagant packages. This kind of perfect love is of course embodied in arguably the most passionate of colors: red.

At its core, *Mr. Nobody* is a film about decision-making. As a child, I used to have a hard time making decisions. Nothing seemed harder than picking a choice between two different things. I have just recently been thinking about how I was back then, and how I am now. After becoming conscious of how, over the years, I have become more eased in my decisions, it makes me wonder if my repeated viewings of this film had an unconscious impact on me. Because it seems the core philosophy of *Mr. Nobody* is that every decision is the right decision.

No Nemo is the same as another in the different timelines, simply because of the different paths they took in life. Yet, that difference is not always a bad thing; in fact, it's the acceptance that you are who you are now because of your decisions which is maybe what makes this a comforting watch for me. It's not a perfect film. Many flaws can be found here and there, and even the overall style of the narrative might turn people off – but it has been, and in many ways, is, a film that I adore. Science fiction might be considered the "coldest" genre, yet *Mr. Nobody* has a heart like no other, and is humane in the ways it explores our psyche, our decision-making process, but most importantly, our longing for love.

I programmed this film for January 31st for CINSSU's Free Friday Film series, because I wanted to see if this film actually has the power to resonate with people. By the time this gets published, I might have even talked to you after the screening. Maybe you weren't there at all. But that's alright with me because at the end of the day, we are the decisions we make.

The Forgotten CGI Spider-Man Show You've Never Seen

Ario Shakarami
ARTS & CULTURE

There's been no shortage of *Spider-Man* cartoons over the years. From 1967 to the present day, we've gotten our fair share of the web-slinger on Saturday mornings. Today, I'd like to dive a bit deeper into arguably the most interesting Spider-Man cartoon to ever air. One that has been repeatedly ignored because of its clear downsides, but still, one with lots of promise and potential. One with a phenomenal story, promising characters, and a mature, gritty tone. I am, of course, talking about the first and only 3D CGI-animated Spider-Man cartoon to ever scar—er, I mean grace—our eyes: *Spider-Man: The NEW Animated Series*! (it's new, guys.)

A lot of people actually grew up with this iteration of Spidey. It was sandwiched between *Spider-Man Unlimited,* which aired in the late 90s, and *Spectacular Spider-Man*, which aired a decade later. All three shows bring something unique to the table, but none of them *look* as strange as this one does in retrospect. Even *Unlimited*'s weird retro style seems rather normal compared to this CG mess. It's hard not to talk about. Frankly, this show has aged poorly in terms of the visuals. It almost gave me flashbacks of *Foodfight!* for a second; I swear, that movie is like Vietnam in my head. CGI was still in its burgeoning age at this time, and even full feature films hadn't mastered the intricacies yet. In 2003, the closest comparison would have been *Finding Nemo*. And that film had millions of dollars and a giant Disney conglomerate behind it. For average shows like this with lower budgets, it would be at least half a decade before they would even look tolerable. *Spider-Man: The New Animated Series* looks cheap: there are often no textures in characters or the mise-en-scène, and the movements look robotic and unnatural at times. But look, this was the first experiment regarding this whole concept, and without shows like this, there may not have been a framework for later series to carry the mantle.

To be fair, there are aspects of the visuals I find appealing. Spidey's suit, for instance, is amazing in this style. There's a nice reflective sheen to it that looks really nice, especially during the swinging scenes. Because of how easy lighting is in CG animation, the different colors and lighting elements in this show add a layer of atmosphere. There are tons of blues, greens, and reds present in many shots that add depth and make it look more lively.

The show's storyline consists of only 13 episodes, mostly episodic, aside from the two-parter arc we get towards the end. Each episode pins the audience against a separate villain while we balance it with Peter's relationships and the whole nine yards. The short season ends with a two-parter called "Mind Games," delving into an Eastern-European duo that mind-controls Peter into thinking he told MJ his secret identity and that she was killed by Kraven the Hunter. It actually ends with Peter hurting the people he loves so badly that he gives up on Spider-Man altogether and throws his suit into the river, walking away. This is NOT the ending I was hoping for this show because it was clearly a cliffhanger in need of revival, but as it stands, this 20-year-old show was left on a bittersweet note. The show also clearly foreshadows Harry Osborne turning into Green Goblin, as every time he sees Spidey there's a quote about how he's a "murderer." I can see how everything was set up for a pretty sick second season. Maybe a movie wouldn't hurt to wrap things up two decades later. It's even crazier when you find out they actually had good ratings but MTV just didn't want to make it anymore. I swear, if I had a nickel for every Spidey show that ended prematurely, I could make J. Jonah Jameson a rich man! Batman never got treated like this in any of his shows, it sucks to see.

At least there are some good villains in this show! We get a bunch of big players from the start, including this super badass-looking Electro, this old lady assassin ninja with a magic sword, and this OTHER lady assassin ninja with an even cooler background. Even Kingpin gets an awesome portrayal here. Although, *sometimes* the villains will be hyped up to be really epic, but then are completely nerfed in their battles with Spidey, which can make what are otherwise exciting fight scenes feel drab and underwhelming.

The main cast of characters is also really well done here, especially Peter, Harry, and MJ. Harry is a blonde rich kid here and his banter with Peter is really in tune with his comic book self. I love watching Spidey shows where they aren't all 13 years old, for God's sake. The back-and-forth banter between them feels more like college-aged dudes and refreshingly comes off as natural-sounding and not cringey. Mary Jane is also really nice here, and her characterization isn't too flanderized in any particular aspect like it was in the Sam Raimi trilogy, for example. Not to mention Peter himself: the perfect blend of nerdy, cool, and heroic. This show was supposed to be a continuation of the first Raimi film, but I always saw it more like the Andrew Garfield Spider-Man archetype. The trio work great together, and this was probably the most realistic trifecta of these three in an animated Spidey show, that I've seen anyway.

The voice actors also bring a lot to the table, especially Neil Patrick Harris as the Webhead himself. Lisa Loeb also does a great job as Mary Jane and Ian Ziering as Harry. It's definitely believable that these characters are continuations of those of Tobey Maguire, James Franco, and Kirsten Dunst from the 2002 film. We do get a J. Jonah Jameson, but he's just an empty husk of a Jameson without J.K. Simmons. There's no Aunt May, sadly, but realistically, how much would we really be missing with the Granny version? What's she gonna do anyway, get kidnapped by Kingpin 100 times?

This show didn't give a flying $#%& about the censors and was probably the most adult Spider-Man show to ever come out. This makes it even more timeless; I enjoyed it as a kid and I'm gonna continue to enjoy it, except now I'm *in on it!* I find myself saying that often about shows from the early 2000s: shows like *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (2003), *Teen Titans,* or *Ben 10*. I love that era of cartoons. I've always seemed to prefer it to the 90s, and even to the 2010s when *I* was a kid. *Batman: The Animated Series* and other mature plots gave birth to the gritty feel of all these early 2000s shows. It gave the writers the liberty to bring the world of comic books to TV, rather than watering down and sugarcoating the source material.

This show definitely had its fair share of dark moments and touched on plenty of more mature themes that added more depth to the characters. This may have made it stand out among other Spidey shows, as diverse as they were in terms of tone, which is why it's been largely overlooked in recent years. Everyone always swoons over *Spectacular*, and for good reason, but in my opinion that show is completely overrated when you compare it to how UNDERrated this show is. Even in animation: while this show looks like *Tin Toy* on crack cocaine, at least it takes risks and liberties that shows like *Spectacular* don't. This show utilizes color, has vibrant fight scenes, and features saturated and well-lit atmospheres. When a show like this gets overlooked and ignored due to technological shortcomings, that's a real shame that needs to be addressed.

This show was also cut short, unceremoniously, as MTV decided that even though the ratings were high compared to other shows in the same time slot, the series didn't fit in with its other programming, for reasons we just discussed. Director Brandon Vietti stated that had the series gone on, he would have used the villains Mysterio, Vulture, and more of Kraven. Sad to see, but at least it got its chance to shine in those short thirteen episodes and prove that this kind of story and art style is at least possible and worth a shot. You love to see a crew get their hands dirty and prove a concept, even if it's cut short in the end.

No other cartoons in recent memory have stood out to me as uniquely as this show, and not just for its visual peculiarity. Something about this series feels special, and it's definitely worth checking out.

Sapphic Romance: Myths and Representation in the "Lesbian Renaissance"

Kiersten Herborth
LOVE / ARTS & CULTURE

In today's media, a growing queer presence can be seen across all platforms. From films and television, to books, and even youtube channels and TikTok pages, the diversity and presence of queer couples has grown a significant amount in the past decade. On social media, many are calling this decade the "Lesbian Renaissance," mainly stemming from the growing popularity of female queer artists and celebrities, such as Chappell Roan, Julien Baker, MUNA, The Beaches, and Cynthia Erivo. With this growing sapphic presence in the media, I wanted to go over a few of the misconceptions and stereotypes associated with lesbians and sapphic relationships.

> **Please note:** this is opinion-based, and is based on my own experiences as well as the experiences of friends and acquaintances around me.

Masc and Fem

One of the most common misconceptions about sapphic relationships is that they must consist of one masculine-presenting individual and one feminine-presenting individual. There are many sapphic relationships where this does occur, but there are also many relationships where this does not. There are also many individuals in relationships who do not present as either feminine or masculine but are more fluid in their style and presentation. Moral of the story: always express yourself based on your own comfort and preferences, you do not have to present differently just because you are in a relationship with someone.

Intimacy

There is no issue with not being intimate in a sapphic relationship, or taking your time with intimacy. Like any relationship, intimacy is not required and is not for everyone. A common stereotype of sapphic relationships is that intimacy occurs very quickly. However, with proper communication of each individual's wishes, you can decide when and how you would like to be intimate with each other, if this is something that you both want. No one in a relationship should ever feel they have to be intimate with their partner for it to be considered a serious relationship.

U-haul Couples

Another huge misconception about sapphic relationships is that sapphic couples move in together incredibly quickly, thus the name "U-haul couples." I know a lot of sapphic couples who have been dating for quite some time and still do not live together, and in my own experience, I have not moved in with a partner. I feel that this is a stereotype associated with older sapphic couples, so maybe this is more prevalent in the older generation. You should never feel pressured to move in with someone who you are in a relationship with if you are not comfortable with it. Like intimacy, choosing when to live with someone takes a lot of communication and trust.

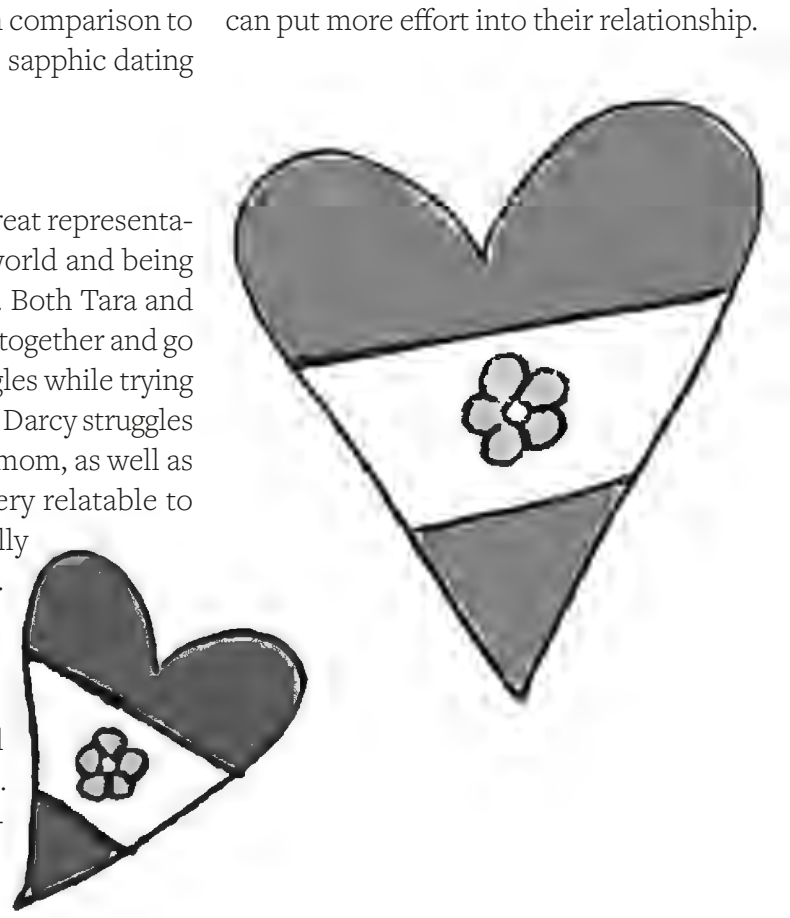
The Septum Piercing

You do not need to have a septum piercing to be a lesbian. Though many lesbians and queer individuals do have septum piercings, it is not a requirement. On the contrary, not everyone with a septum piercing is queer. A piercing, like all jewelry, is a form of self-expression. If you are currently debating getting a septum piercing, think to yourself, "Will this piercing make me feel more confident, and make me happy?" and consider if you would be getting the piercing to make yourself happy or to make others happy.

With all this in mind, I wanted to point out some examples of great sapphic couples in modern television. As a lesbian myself, I found these couples to be very realistic and relatable in comparison to my and others' experiences in the sapphic dating world.

Heartstopper — Tara and Darcy

The entirety of *Heartstopper* is a great representation of young love in the queer world and being in your first sapphic relationship. Both Tara and Darcy are figuring out themselves together and go through their own personal struggles while trying to maintain a healthy relationship. Darcy struggles with their relationship with their mom, as well as their gender identity, which is very relatable to many queer youth today, especially in the current political climate. They only feel confident around their other queer friends, and away from their mother because they do not think that their mother will accept them for who they truly are. Tara struggles with the responsibility of being a "model student," and also struggles to come out as a lesbian to her peers.



The Haunting of Bly Manor — Dani and Jamie

The relationship between Dani and Jamie was very important to the plot of the series, but came up very naturally in the show. Dani struggles with PTSD from the death of her fiancé, as well as trying to understand her sexuality. She blames herself for the death of her past fiancé, as she confessed to him just moments before his death that she did not have feelings for him. Jamie is the gardener at Bly Manor and first comes off as quite mysterious, the audience not knowing much about her past and not seeing very much of her in the first few episodes of the series. As the series goes on, we see the tension build between the two characters, and they eventually fall in love and plan their future together. I feel that they are a more accurate portrayal of a sapphic couple because they are both quite confused at first, needing some time to get to know each other before figuring out their feelings together. I feel that is a very realistic approach to starting a relationship with someone, especially a sapphic relationship as sometimes it is hard to tell whether or not you feel a connection platonically or romantically when dating someone of the same gender.

Adventure Time — Marceline and Princess Bubblegum

Yes, this is a cartoon. However, I feel that Marceline and Princess Bubblegum have a very realistic sapphic relationship. First, both Marceline and Princess Bubblegum are very fluid with their gender expression, so neither of them is more feminine nor more masculine. Additionally, I also found it very realistic how the two of them needed to break up so they could both face their own personal struggles and rediscover themselves and their own interests. That made their relationship so much stronger when they got back together with both of them becoming more confident individuals who can put more effort into their relationship.

Every Bridgerton Book, Ranked

Zoë Johnston
ARTS & CULTURE

You know Bridgerton. I know Bridgerton. Everyone knows Bridgerton. Combined, its three seasons (released in 2020, 2022, and 2024 respectively) have been viewed somewhere around 300 million times on streaming juggernaut Netflix, with a fourth season anticipated in the summer of 2026. The series follows the alphabetically-named Bridgerton siblings as they navigate the Regency social scene, enter courtships, and enjoy semi-tasteful romps with suitors in period undergarments while acoustic covers of pop songs play. While many probably know that the show is based on a novel series, written by prolific romance author Julia Quinn, many probably have not read those novels. That is wise of them because the Bridgerton books are not very good.

That's not to say I didn't like them. I delight in things that are bad. I love *True Blood* and *Riverdale* and a great number of trashy CW dramas. I genuinely believe *Glee* is one of the best shows ever made and will defend its merit to anyone who will listen and a lot of people who won't. I found the series compulsively easy to read, blew through them all in about a week and a half, and have ranked them for you here, based on my entirely subjective opinion that has nothing to do with literary merit and everything to do with how much fun I had reading them.

8. Romancing Mr. Bridgerton (#4, Colin and Penelope's Story)

I am not a fan of Colin in the show, so this ranking did not surprise me, but I HATED him in the book. This is largely because I think unrequited love where the woman is in love with the man first is such a noxious and foul concept that anyone who uses this trope should be jailed. If he isn't begging on his knees I don't want it. Besides that, book Colin is somehow more unlikeable than show Colin: he puts his hands on Penelope several times, hates that he has an ambitious and successful wife who makes them inordinate amounts of money because HE wants to be a writer and doesn't think they can both be writers, and only starts paying attention to Penelope when she loses weight. I think we should kill book Colin with hammers.

7. To Sir Phillip With Love (#5, Eloise and Phillip's Story)

They took incredible creative liberties with Eloise in the show, because in this book, she is shockingly comfortable marrying a man who openly tells her he just wants a wife to A) bang and B) mother his children so he doesn't have to. It was genuinely startling to go from show Eloise, who is so confident and outspoken and disinterested in men who are beneath her, to book Eloise, who feels worse for Phillip (a man who made his wife's postpartum depression about himself) than she does for Marina (his aforementioned wife, who killed herself due to said postpartum depression). None of the characters in this novel, nor Quinn herself, extend any sympathy to Marina's struggles. Instead, they choose to focus on Phillip and how hard it was for him to be expected to parent his own children without the promise of sex at the end of the day. Thankfully, Eloise is there to parent his children AND have sex with him!

6. It's In His Kiss (#7, Hyacinth and Gareth's Story)

A pattern is starting to emerge in these books in which the female lead is so wonderful to read about and the male lead is also there, Kill Bill sirens blaring every time he speaks. I suspect this is a trope of the genre, but it is exemplified in Gareth St. Clair, Lady Danbury's nephew, who has so many daddy issues he purposefully takes Hyacinth's virginity before their wedding in case she tries to back out upon learning he's a bastard. Luckily for him (and not for me), Hyacinth seems shockingly unbothered by this, and they get married and have a bunch of kids anyway. Hurray.

5. On The Way To The Wedding (#8, Gregory and Lucy's Story)

This would have ranked higher if it weren't for the reveal at the end of the book that Gregory and Lucy have nine children back-to-back. The idea of having a child a year for a decade sent chills down my spine. Besides that, I liked the story of this book. Gregory interrupting a wedding was a much better declaration of love than anything Colin, Phillip, or Gareth could summon up. The kidnapping story I could have done without, but I think that was the worst thing Gregory did all book, so I'll take it. The bar is in hell.

4. The Duke and I (#1, Daphne and Simon's Story)

The show did it better in this case. Simon's insane possessiveness and borderline sociopathic tendencies might work for some people, but it did not work for me. I will admit that the show did manage to capture the absurd chemistry that Simon and Daphne have in the book and their banter was really fun to read. Unfortunately, the sexual assault scene that's barely touched on in the show is significantly worse in the book, and it sours the happily-ever-after ending that barely felt earned. It's a shame that Daphne's only moment of real agency in this entire book is to assault her husband. Why can't they just talk to each other like adults?

3. An Offer From A Gentleman (#3, Benedict and Sophie's Story)

Once again we see an intelligent, funny, and vivacious heroine, and her love interest, guy-who-hates-women. Benedict spends most of this book trying to badger Sophie into sleeping with him in between protecting her from men who are trying to badger her into having sex with them. I do think this might be the first book in which relationships between women have any complexity, which is probably why I like it so much. Giving Sophie's evil stepmother depth, nuance, and actual motivation was the absolute best thing to do for a modified Cinderella story, and it shows. However, Benedict sort of drags the whole thing down, and he's not even bisexual to make up for it.

2. The Viscount Who Loved Me (#2, Anthony and Kate's Story)

I'll admit this was coloured by how much I loved Kate in the show, but I think the book did this storyline better! For one, Anthony and Edwina don't get engaged and Edwina doesn't really seem to like him that much, meaning I don't have to think about how much of a dick move it is to steal your little sister's fiancé on her wedding day because you can't cop up to liking him. They also did enemies to lovers really well. I truly believed they hated each other's guts for most of the book. Additionally, Newton! Anthony is obnoxious throughout, but I'm choosing to believe that's a character choice rather than Quinn thinking it's hot and charming to act like that. It's for my own sanity.

1. When He Was Wicked (#6, Francesca and Michael's Story)

Admittedly, my excitement for this to be a lesbian storyline on the show might have given me some unconscious bias here, but this was the best book by far. The fact that the barrier between them getting together wasn't just "I don't want to be in love" or "You're too poor for me" added a lot of emotional depth, and I got the unrequited-love-where-he's-in-love-with-her that I'd been missing since book 3. It also helped that Michael, despite that period-appropriate misogyny, was an alright dude who didn't want to do anything Francesca wasn't comfortable with. When Francesca's season comes out and it's Michaela she falls in love with, I'm going to pop so many bottles you can hear it from space.

Are these books good? No. Should you read them anyway? Probably not, unless you enjoy punishing yourself and/or feel inclined to reread the same book eight times. They are all nearly identical: in plot structure, down to the placement of the sex scenes throughout the narrative; in characters, with fun, interesting heroines and slices of misogynistic Wonder Bread as heroes; and in grammar and syntax, considering I found the same typo three times in three different books. You're better off saving yourself the time and energy, watching the show eight times, and pretending Eloise and Cressida end up together.

Oh, To Be Written by a Woman

Gender Bias in Literature: The "Men Written by Women" Epidemic

Suraiya Jiwani
ARTS & CULTURE

While it might not be as obvious as McDonald's "girl toy" and "boy toy" options, it's no secret that media has a starring role in rehashing gender norms and stereotypes. From the stoic action hero who solves problems with his fists to the nurturing mother figure who sacrifices everything for her family, these archetypes create a blueprint for how men and women are "supposed" to behave. Literature has long been guilty of reproducing these character tropes, often depicting men as emotionally unavailable, while women are defined by their emotional labour.

This dynamic doesn't just shape how characters are written—it shapes how we, as readers, interpret them. When a male character displays vulnerability or emotional depth, readers are quick to attribute this to the "female touch" of a woman author. Why do we assume emotional maturity belongs exclusively to femininity?

Different social environments foster different experiences. An individual's experiences will undoubtedly shape their personality, values, and how they interact with the world. For creatives, their art often reflects their lives. Authors, particularly, tend to write about things they are familiar with. Whether it is intentionally used or more of a subconscious bias, personal experience and opinion will guide their work.

This is when characterization comes into play. Any text, especially fiction and creative writing, can feel genuine if it is written by someone with similar experiences. For example, a female character written by a female author might include more nuance and detail in specific areas, something that can only be meaningfully expressed by a writer who has experienced these things themselves.

Picture this: the main character had a rough day, so her boyfriend bought her chocolate. This scene must have been written by a woman because of its emotional theme and tender-hearted male lead. Surely, no male author could fathom the concept of a boyfriend expressing care through something as nuanced as chocolate.

Jokes aside, this speaks to the subtle biases we hold as readers. When we encounter a male character with emotional depth, our first instinct is often to credit the writer's gender. It's as if compassion and vulnerability are trade secrets that only women have access to. This not only reduces authorship to a matter of gender but also reinforces the stereotypes we claim to be moving past.

To be "written by a woman" is to exude traits that are stereotypically associated with femininity— being nurturing, thoughtful, and most of all, emotionally intelligent. On the surface, this seems like a compliment. At the root of it, however, attributing emotional security to being woman-like implies that being masculine and showing emotion are mutually exclusive. These assumptions cut both ways, boxing women into the role of emotional caretakers while distancing men from the same qualities. This is where the concept of "men written by women" steps in, furthering these stereotypes under the guise of praise.

"Men written by women" inherently recycles the gender norms and stereotypes perpetuated by society. It encourages the idea that traits of emotional maturity will always be at the hands of women and femininity, and cautions men to identify with anything other than stereotypical masculinity.

However, a male character created by a female author is not necessarily destined to take on this role. My favourite example of this is in Colleen Hoover's *It Ends With Us*, which documents a woman's experience in an abusive relationship. Ryle, the male lead, checks all of the boxes one would want in a partner: handsome, charming, ready to put their hands around your neck if they have a bad day at work...the list goes on.

It goes without saying that Ryle isn't the cookie-cutter version of a man written by a woman. His character shows that male leads written by women aren't always pillars of emotional maturity; sometimes, they're deeply flawed, even dangerous. This complicates the idea that women write men in a singular, emotion-driven way, highlighting how reductive it is to frame women's writing solely through the lens of emotion. The trope of being "written by a woman" doesn't just pigeonhole men as either emotionally stunted or emotionally perfect—it also reinforces the stereotype that women are defined by their capacity for feeling, as though their writing is confined to emotional narratives and nothing more.

When we view authorship only from the perspective of gender, we risk stripping stories of their complexity and reducing characters to stereotypes. Emotional depth is not inherently feminine, just as stoicism is not inherently masculine. Fiction, in its best form, creates room for nuance where men can cry and women can rage, and where stories can unfold without the weight of societal expectations.

THE ICSS DID NOT SEND US THEIR AD IN TIME SO I DREW THIS ON A TISSUE. -YASH
ICSS FORMAL
• SATURDAY, MARCH 22nd
• 3 COURSE DINNER + OPEN BAR!
• THE OMNI KING EDWARD HOTEL (37 KING ST. E)
PLS GO.

> the Herald's got mail!

to: the Innis Herald
from: an obsessive reader with an unfortunately basic name
subject: Behold! a Love Letter. (because the Herald too deserves a happy valentine's.)

january 17, 2025

dear Herald,

I hope you know how excited i am for this new edition. I have been silently enjoying your past two issues (i'm a first year — please don't shoot me) and their at times sober, at times hysterical, and at times meditative content.

You may not be aware, but during these past few months, you have become my most cherished companion. In fact, i often find myself awaiting you, hoping for a new, fat, brilliant stack of hotly-printed, ink-scented newspapers to drop on my desk as i set things up for my shift at Innis Library. And when you do, when you finally make your long-anticipated appearance, i immediately take you up to feel you in my hands and examine the crisp body... of text (and illustrations, and images) begging to be unveiled by the public's impatient eyes.

The first time my gaze fell upon one of your open spreads — back in September when i was a terrified teen with my first ever real job (how time flies!) — i remember being greeted by a brat-green square of anthropomorphized creatures, random snippets of (barely) anonymous thoughts, and way too many details about the editor-in-chief's personal life (written with extremely satisfying capitalization errors). Of course, i was instantly hooked. What???? You mean to tell me that students at this institution can just get together to work on publishing any and all of their silly stupid thoughts, and through the power of friendship and caffeine (i presume) produce an actual high-quality, professional-looking, *printed* newspaper? Unlike my ugly, *online* high school newspaper that i was absolutely responsible for and essentially gave up on in grade 12 because i'm nothing but a lazy bitch??

Ok. That one was maybe my fault. But this conclusion only further reinforces the admirable qualities of the entire Herald team. So really, although I began this letter by personifying the Herald in a strange and slightly horny way, one must not forget that all the names listed on that second page and those under each article title represent real breathing people!!! Who made the commitment to dedicate part of their time to the paper for a few hours of their year (or more)!!! Round of applause.

As i flipped through the pages of v60e1, this realization stuck with me. One second, i was frantically adding films to my watchlist, struck by the notion that a student had attended the press screenings; the next, i was planning a trip to New York, after learning about a random economist no one's ever heard of (the article was great nonetheless). This was followed by lists of cultural recommendations and a glimpse into the fictional wor(l)ds of a few student writers. v60e2, likewise, delivered. The more i read, the more i felt compelled to contemplate the importance of student newspapers. Below are my findings (maybe the point of this letter after all).

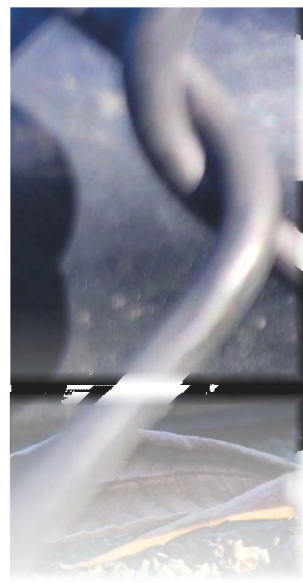
Papers like the Herald provide quality writing: informative articles on real-life people and events, interspersed by opinion pieces from young adults able to speak to their like-minded peers in an enthusiastic, sometimes hilarious, and, more crucially, modern tone, along with insanely cool images and artworks. Papers like the Herald represent an outlet for all the rich ideas and pressing concerns of people our age. Papers like the Herald aren't just delightful armchairs of relaxation; they constitute a vital part of the university ecosystem. Papers like the Herald are a breath of fresh air. Symbols. 'Ironic points of light.' The very existence of papers like the Herald proves that our generation is composed of bright, human, persistent beings, who *do* care — about life, the future, and others. They show that we are eager and willing, aka we have the heart and soul to put time and energy into things we care about.

[if you are familiar with ENG140: isn't the Herald a pretty good and gorgeous example of the DIY ethic :P? s/o prof Hammond.]

For my part, reading the Herald gave me a renewed energy to write. This letter, obviously, but also to take up my personal writing again. Academia can be daunting and lead to a drought of creative juices, but to see others take the time to write, draw, and photograph stuff is furiously inspiring! Over the past few weeks, i have therefore sharpened pencils, reopened long-abandoned docs and dusty notebooks, and even submitted some of my writing to a few student journals (#spooky). So far, my creative endeavours have included personalized letters to my pen-pal and other friends and loved ones; four new finished poems; and six diary entries. And i do believe that i'm not the only one to have felt such intense feelings of inspiration. *Thank you* for creating a muse.

In conclusion, hot people read the Herald, and hotter people reflect on the Herald (and the hottest people run the Herald, but that goes without saying).

With love,
chloe gong-miniere



Back Ca

in 2013, th dollars / f

Nghi Nguyen

Part 1: Grass

> *Loafe with me on*
> *throat,*
> *Not words, not m*
> *or lecture, not*
> *Only the lull I like*

(*Whitman, "Song*

The most famous b that I know of — co describes the grass under the morning s our attempts to imi recreate that intimac

Before 2013, Bac It was an open spac to utilize for leisure, from their throats. I sports practice, and point. The land's pu important however, tested the turfing no *playing* on Back Cam

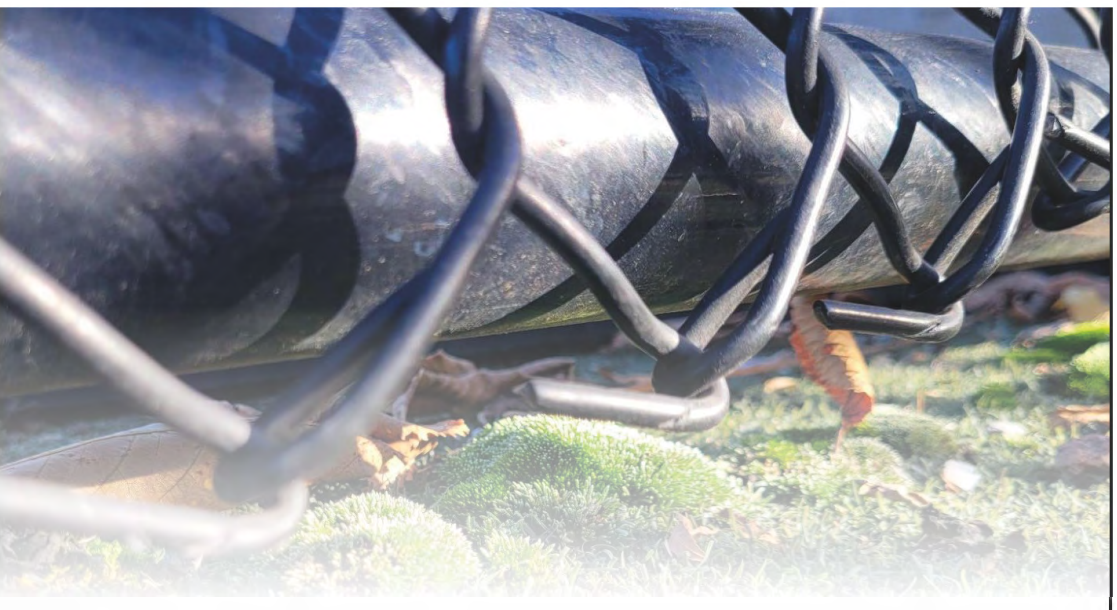
Despite the stron We see that defeat cl

Though Back C space, and certainly it without much resi it being used for casu never seen someone nap, and certainly no a date here. The lack that never goes away the fencing that mak mean, I think it's just has exit signs, don't Campus being a less-

But I don't want we lost. We lost. The and we, eternally, w little hope in trying t fundamentally, so let

Part 2: Change

Bruce Kidd, who wa a public spokesper claimed that "The la will remain essential have listed, time has fundamentally wron



ampus, Healing

he university of toronto paid 9.5 million for a green carpet rolled over // Grass

n

the grass, loose the stop from your

usic or rhyme I want, not custom
even the best,
e, the hum of your valvèd voice.

g of Myself," lines 74-76)

body of poetry about grass — omes from Walt Whitman. He as a place to lie upon, in June un, to kiss one another. I think itate grass via turf struggle to cy.

ck Campus was real, live grass. e for students and pedestrians to "loafe" and loosen the stops t was, of course, also used for even for drilling soldiers at one rpose for leisure seemed most evinced by students who pro- t with chants nor signs, but by mpus.

g resistance, the protestors lost. learly now.

ampus claims to be an open you can take a shortcut through stance, I have never witnessed ual purposes beyond that. I have e read a book here, or picnic or one is taking their loved one on of shade; the strange dampness ; the plastic that crumbles off; kes it hard to enter and exit (I a little weird that an open field you?) — all contribute to Back -than-welcoming space.

t to dwell a long time on what e protesters lost the resistance, ill have lost the grass. There is o reverse what has changed so us focus on the transfiguration.

as Warden of Hart House and son in defense of the turfing, andscape of the Back Campus ly the same." For reasons that I proven that Kidd's statement is g.

I also think he contradicted himself with that line. Anything there is to gain from a turfed Back Campus comes from change.

He's right that there is much less mud. I am not an athlete myself, but I've borne witness to many sporting events that happened here: soccer, lacrosse, field hockey, track and field. I'm glad for the athletes that reap value from this space. The point of the turfing was to provide a safer, better space for professional-level sports, and just that was achieved.

With some techniques of black-out poetry, I can appropriate Kidd's quote a little to make it more accurate:

"The landscape of the Back Campus will [redacted] essentially the same."

Back Campus is a space that was changed so entirely it could never change again. After the snow melts upon the land, its soil will not soften. The grass will not grow too tall. But the resilient moss has other plans.

Part 3: Moss

We took away the grass but moss is here. Moss grows beneath the fences, between cracks of concrete, in the seams of turf, and in some spots, on it. Before the turfing, grass would have likely outcompeted moss, but now there's no soil, which is a terrible detriment to grass and great news for moss.

Moss is incredible evolutionarily since it needs so little to survive. It can tolerate being nearly completely dried out, losing 98% of its water content, and still survive for months until the next contact with water. As Robin Wall Kimmerer writes in her *Gathering Moss,* "Mosses have a covenant with change."

I was so angry when I first heard of Back Campus's history. The concept of killing something that lived and replacing it with a plastic replica — at such a steep cost — is maddening. But I very quickly realized there is so little room for anger after the change has been made; there is only space for grief, and it's an important emotion.

Now I have a choice to direct what I should do with that grief. We all have a choice. We must look ahead and make better decisions, because now we have learned the consequences of breaking the land's back.

Conclusion

Like grass for Whitman, nature has inspired so much art and poetry. I questioned if Back Campus would still be able to beget art, and it still does, because it still lives. I have a poem to prove that.

on back campus i find the meaning of carpe diem

in 2013, the university of toronto paid 9.5 million dollars
for a green carpet rolled over

Grass

they broke the Land's back
for a game of field hockey
and claimed

nothing would change[1]

they were right

nothing will change
because everything has

they crushed

a flattening iron against the crinkled Earth to make it straight
now nothing will live or die because everything that breathed
stopped

and now it's perfect

~

did i ever tell you
i hate growing up
but not growing?

the process is too vertical for me
when i was 13 and mad at my mom i used to sit on Grass fields
and tear up the blades fistfuls at a time

i cried because
the world was spinning so fast
a treadmill on which i could not run fast enough

i gripped onto Grass to keep me from falling off

~

in Grass's wake, Moss grows in the seams of astroturf and concrete

i think Moss is practicing *kintsugi*
the japanese art of repairing broken ceramic with lacquer
and dusting the cracks with gold

the golden ruptures here are one-dimensional
too straight to appear broken but Moss knows

to be complete is to grow
not up but sideways and sometimes
not at all

but She never stops striving for Her one need and want:

life

which She lives
and She gives

clinging on to crumbling plastic
never worrying about the strength of Her hold

[1]Paraphrase of "The landscape of the Back Campus will remain essentially the same" (Kidd, 2013).

Kidd, B. (2013, June 4). *U of T's unsafe grass and mud have no heritage value*. The Globe and Mail. https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/education/u-of-ts-unsafe-grass-and-mud-have-no-heritage-value/article12343992/

Canada's Leadership Crisis in the Face of Trump 2.0 and Rising American Aggression

Kyle Newcombe
POLITICS

Canadian politics are, as of now, in a tremendously uncertain state of flux. Not only has our Prime Minister resigned, we are also being buffeted by a rising storm coming from the direction of our nearest neighbour and longtime ally, the United States.

Going into the fall, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was facing declining approval ratings and the threat of his entire government collapsing. Having won a minority government in the 2021 election, Trudeau's Liberals needed other parties' support in order to govern. With the Bloc Québécois already gone and Trudeau's polling numbers reaching Michael Ignatieff territory, the New Democratic Party (NDP) remained the last external bastion of support for Trudeau's government. NDP leader Jagmeet Singh will (rather famously) qualify for his full government pension this month (February 2025), so once parliament was on its winter break he finally pulled the plug, saying on December 20th that the NDP would not support Trudeau at the next no-confidence vote in the new year.

That wasn't the end of it for Trudeau, however. He was already dealing with the fallout from the resignation of his finance minister, Chrystia Freeland, who wrote a scathing resignation letter on her way out accusing him of trying to buy off voters with "political gimmicks" and pinning the blame squarely on him for Canada's current budget woes. Also facing increasing calls to step down from within his own party, Trudeau eventually pledged to resign, delivering the news in an address on January 6th. Trudeau is still our Prime Minister at the time of writing, as he will stay in the role until a new Liberal leader is chosen to replace him.

Meanwhile, we are waiting for the inevitable federal election that is soon to come. Parliament is currently prorogued, meaning that it is out of session until at least March 24th (there is a pending challenge to the prorogation, however). There are a few possible paths once parliament returns; the Liberal government could be toppled in a no-confidence vote, triggering an election that could happen as soon as May, or the new Liberal leader may be able to placate some of the former coalition members, delaying the election until the fall.

This federal government gamesmanship could not be coming at a worse time for Canada. As I write this, Donald Trump is getting sworn in as the 47th president of the United States, with nearly existential implications for Canada. Trump has been touting territorial expansion and trade protectionism as cornerstones of his new administration's policies, even more so than in his first term. Trump's implicit threats to use military force to achieve expansion objectives in Greenland and Panama are in direct violation of the rules-based order that the US themselves helped create, not that the US has ever followed their own rules. He has also threatened devastating tariffs on not only America's adversaries, but allies as well. This has placed Canada squarely in the US's crosshairs, with Trump threatening to make Canada the 51st state with so-called "economic force," including universal 25% tariffs on Canadian goods. While Trump did not institute any tariffs on day one, they are still very much on the table. As of now, it looks like March is the likely time for the implementation of Trump's first round of tariffs.

To justify his Canadian annexation agenda, Trump has made a number of claims about the US's trade relationship with Canada. He has again pointed out that the US has a trade deficit with Canada, claiming that the US subsidizes Canada. He has accused former finance minister Crystia Freeland of being "toxic" in previous USMCA negotiations in his first term. Canada has indeed been rightfully accused of being too protective of certain industries in the past, such as our uncompetitive dairy industry. But in terms of being "subsidized" by the US? As Joe Biden would say, "I've never heard so much malarkey in my whole life."

First, trade deficits are not "subsidies." They arise when a country imports more from another country than they export to that same country. This can be due to any number of factors, and isn't inherently a bad thing. Especially in the US's case, their many trade deficits are mostly due to the fact that they are just so *rich*. Relative to their major trading partners, especially Mexico and China but also Canada, the United States is much wealthier on average with significantly higher per-person productivity. The American consumer is famously unstoppable, and the ability to afford to buy foreign products is a good thing. It is therefore hard for the US to have a trade surplus with a given trading partner, because its citizens buy *so much stuff*. Just ask anyone who's used Temu.

The specific nature of a trade deficit is also important to understand in order to assess the health of a given trade relationship. Trump often references the goods trade balance with Canada, but a more holistic measure is the goods *and services* trade balance; when accounting for services, the US's trade deficit with Canada shrinks by almost half since they are a net exporter of services to Canada. The remaining deficit number ($40B USD) is almost entirely composed of oil exports from Canada to the US. Despite the post-2008 shale boom turning the US from an energy backwater to an energy superpower virtually overnight, the US still gets 60% of its crude oil imports from Canada. Again, it's worth looking at why; American oil refining capacity is largely built around heavy crude oil (such as the type produced in the Alberta oil sands), not the lighter crude oil extracted from its own shale deposits. Unless the US begins a massive rebuild of their refining infrastructure, they will continue to import large amounts of oil from Canada. Many American jobs depend on it.

Trump has also mischaracterized where the burden of his tariffs will fall, repeatedly and falsely claiming that American businesses and consumers will not be impacted (while tacitly admitting that prices will rise more recently). Aside from increased costs for households and businesses, tariffs may reignite the post-COVID inflation that the Federal Reserve has worked so hard to tame. In the meantime, Canadian factories have been in overdrive since Q4, producing and exporting as many goods as possible in advance of tariffs taking effect.

While Trump referring to Justin Trudeau as "governor" is undeniably hilarious, by now I find the "Canada should be the 51st state" narrative entirely unfunny. Despite what Fox News host Jesse Watters seems to believe, there are many reasons why Canada isn't some natural expansion of American territory. Canada and the United States have entirely different histories, geographies, and people. We have never controlled meaningful amounts of each other's territory for extended periods of time. And Canada has always had America's back: 158 Canadian service members died in Afghanistan helping the US avenge 9/11, and Canadian equipment and personnel joined in the fight against the recent Los Angeles wildfires. As many "rah-rah" America types as there are in the US, we have plenty of patriotism up here too. We aren't waiting for someone to swoop in and save us; while Canada undeniably has problems right now, we can and will fix them on our own.

Amidst non-existent federal leadership, it has fallen on provincial premiers to help push back against this inane American expansionism rhetoric. While I chuckled at Justin Trudeau's social media post saying that there isn't a "snowball's chance in hell" of Canada joining the US, other political cast members have been getting down to brass tacks. Say what you want about Danielle Smith and Doug Ford (and I have), but the former met with Trump at Mar-a-Lago and the latter has ratcheted up the rhetoric and even threatened to cut off Ontario's electricity exports to, and alcohol imports from, the US. While I'm frankly happy to see anyone standing up for Canada, our approach needs to get into much better shape fast if we are to meet the challenge of a second Trump term.

And the consequences of not meeting that challenge could not be higher. An average of 80% of Canadian exports are sent to the US, and if all of Trump's proposed trade policies are implemented we could be looking at a catastrophic 2% hit to our real GDP and up to 400,000 job losses. This would worsen our ongoing productivity crisis, and severely constrain any fiscal leeway we have left. A bit further down the road, the USMCA is up for renegotiation; some concessions will likely be needed to appease Trump, which could have consequences for decades.

In the background, the Liberal Party has already begun the selection process for their new leader to replace Trudeau. Despite many notable members declining to run, some recognizable faces have thrown their hats in the ring. Remember Chrystia Freeland? She has begun pitching herself as a tested Trump negotiator while vying for the position. Former Bank of Canada Governor Mark Carney has also announced his candidacy at the same time much of his former work on sustainable finance has come crumbling down. All of the candidates will need to walk a fine line similar to Kamala Harris when she took over Joe Biden's campaign for the presidency; they'll need to reaffirm their support for liberal values and causes while simultaneously distancing themselves from the deeply unpopular Trudeau government and its policies. The leadership vote will take place on March 9th.

Whoever the new Liberal leader ends up being, it's likely a moot point. Pierre Poilievre and the Conservative Party have all the momentum and the poll numbers to back it up. While there's a lot not to like about Poilievre (such as his constant railing against "elites" while he himself is a career politician), I've been genuinely intrigued and impressed by some of his policy proposals, including withholding funding from cities that fail to build dense housing near public transit stations. He also has a bit of undeniable swagger that our country is sorely lacking, so I'm willing to keep an open mind for now. With our country facing simultaneous domestic uncertainty and a whole new level of Trump spectacle next door, we as citizens must remain engaged and make our voices heard not only domestically, but internationally. As Doug Ford's hat says: "Canada is not for sale."

After the Buzzer

Love of the Game

Julian Apolinario
LOVE / SPORTS

Hello! I'm Julian, one of the Herald's Creative Directors! For the second edition of After the Buzzer, I wanted to explore the relationship between athletes, sports fans, and what begins a person's passion for sports. I polled 21 people for the Herald to see how they would answer the question:

"What was the moment or event that made you fall in love with sports?"

Watching NFL with my dad.

Robbie

Watching the 2014 World Cup with my Dad.

Kenny Vo

Watching Man United beat Celtic at BMO Field in a pre-season friendly with my Dad.

Alex Pilling

Kawhi, Game 7.

Derrick

Not playing sports, but watching them: seeing the Leafs live! It made me feel like part of a community. It's true what they say, that you make friends with the fans around you just for that one night.

Christina Kinsella

2012, Montellier, one of the last French clubs owned by a local family, wins its first Ligue 1.

Luke

Vic MMA

Victoria College Mixed Martial Arts

I fall in and out of love with sports. The most recent moment was the 2024 FA Cup Quarter Final. Diallo scored a last minute stoppage time goal to send United to the semis against their historic rivals Liverpool. It showed me – and I'm sure many others following English football – that even the worst Manchester United side in decades can tear apart a top team.

Hamza

The energy in the crowd when you go watch a game – specifically Blue Jays games during summer at the stadium!

Emmeline Accardi

Keeping up with the FIFA World Cup in 2022! Seeing Messi win with Argentina.

Candace Sara Ciju

For me it started in middle school, getting into sports mostly as a way to channel my energy. But then I really fell in love with the team aspect and having everyone supporting each other on and off of the field. I liked sports as a way of getting to meet people and make new friends, and I think it's a really good way of doing that.

Sophia Davoli

Max Holloway buzzer beater knocking out Justin Gaethje at UFC 300 (late to the game, I know).

Alex

Hearing Liverpool fans sing "You'll Never Walk Alone," when I was like 11 at a pub.

Mohamed

The cultural impact of the Raptors playoff win.

Derrick Britton

I fell in love with sparring the first time I took a hard jab to the face.

Anonymous

Joined my high school rugby team right as the 2019 Rugby World Cup was kicking off, we all got behind South Africa. They started off on a sour note with a loss to New Zealand but went on to win the World Cup against England 32-12 – legendary moment.

Rudy Yuan

Does 2K count?

Anonymous

Watching Dustin Porier knock out Connor McGregor and then watching Oliveria choke Dustin out.

Richard Leung

Messi on Barca and Ronaldo on RM era, and the World Cup in Brazil!

Mayde Munoz

I used to find Andy Murray soooooooo hot when I was nine.

Anonymous

My sophomore year I was pulled up to be the setter on the varsity volleyball team. It was a steep learning curve, and after our first win the entire team dogpiled on top of us. In that moment I realized I loved sports – it pushes me to grow as an athlete and individual, and I treasure the bonds I've formed with my teammates.

Daniella Chung,
UofT Women's Flag Football

Some answers were edited slightly for grammar and clarity

And now, I suppose, it's my turn. The 2023 Women's College Basketball Tournament. At the time, I was just a casual fan of basketball, but I *loved* music like nothing else. So, when I saw Louisiana State University's women's basketball team celebrating a win with glee and abandon as the sound of Boosie's "Set It Off" blasted in the background, I knew I had come across people I could identify with. People who got that excited about anything and expressed it by screaming along to music I love were people I wanted to be excited *with*. While there were lots of moments that began the interest, I'll call that moment – of identifying with other college students thousands of miles away – the first time I felt real passion for sports.

I strongly believe that the best way to get someone into sports is by getting them to understand or undertake a narrative. Ages ago, I saw a video from a man who explained that he got his girlfriend to start watching sports by explaining the NBA to her like she was watching seasons of Game of Thrones, with intertwining plots and human characters who felt complex emotions, had complex relationships, and were more than random men sweating on television. I believe that enjoyment of sports all comes down to the stories told during games – the rise and fall of franchises, the highs of ultimate success, and the crushing pain of abysmal failure. The stories that athletes live out for themselves every night for the entertainment of the public, performing feats of strength and agility with the hope of victory. People connect to sports with their families and friends and have stories of games woven into their childhoods and formative years. And as a player, I think the same is true: when you start on a journey as an athlete, you're usually not very good and need to spend hours training and improving yourself, sometimes alone, sometimes with a team or community to support you. There are moments of personal growth and personal failure, and opportunities for human connection abound – all the makings of good stories – coloured with bursts of action to make sure your viewers always stay on the edge of their seats. Being able to see yourself change and develop through sport is a great privilege, and is the very stuff from which a great story is produced.

Sports are all about stories, whether you're seeing your own play out, or following along from behind a screen or the fences of a stadium. This Valentine's season, it warms my heart to see everyone's different responses and to get a glimpse into how sports became a meaningful part of their lives. These 21 certainly have love of the game – do you?

The Birds and the Bees

Romance in the Plant Kingdom

Yash Kumar Singhal
LOVE / SCIENCE

You open your eyes to bright, hot, unforgiving sun beating down on you. As you try to turn away, you realise that the lower half of your body is buried in the ground. You are stuck, unable to move from your place, but for some reason you don't seem to care. The only thing on your mind: sex.

For context, this is what I imagine it's like to be a plant. It is an intriguing thought exercise, even just to get a sense of how different their lives are from us. From an evolutionary perspective, it is an incredibly interesting problem to be rooted to the ground and unable to move around. This is particularly pertinent to the endeavour of producing progeny, for which the plants must somehow get to others of their kind. Over the hundreds of millions of years that plants have been around, nature has come up with some fascinatingly creative solutions to this challenge.

Before we go any further, a quick crash course on sexual reproduction- many plants, most animals, and ofcourse... people, need two special cells called gametes (one from the dad and one from the mum) to fuse in order to create an offspring. Pollen, the same stuff that causes your seasonal allergies, is the male gamete in the case of many plants and needs to make its way to the female gamete somewhere on another plant. The problem is that when you are stuck where you are, it is hard to get your gametes anywhere, let alone onto a specific part of another plant that also has to be of the same species as you.

Older types of plants solved the problem of gamete transfer by harnessing the wind and the waterways. Mosses, cycads, and ginkgo actually produce gametes that can move on their own, teeny little cells propelled by even teenier tails or hairs. Imagine a plant cell, swimming between plants through puddles and raindrops. This mode of movement only really works when individuals are growing close together and in areas with a lot of water. Many conifers like pine or spruce produce a large amount of extremely light pollen that can get picked up by the wind until maybe, just maybe, a couple of them happen to land on another plant. A game of chance sure, but such is the pursuit of love.

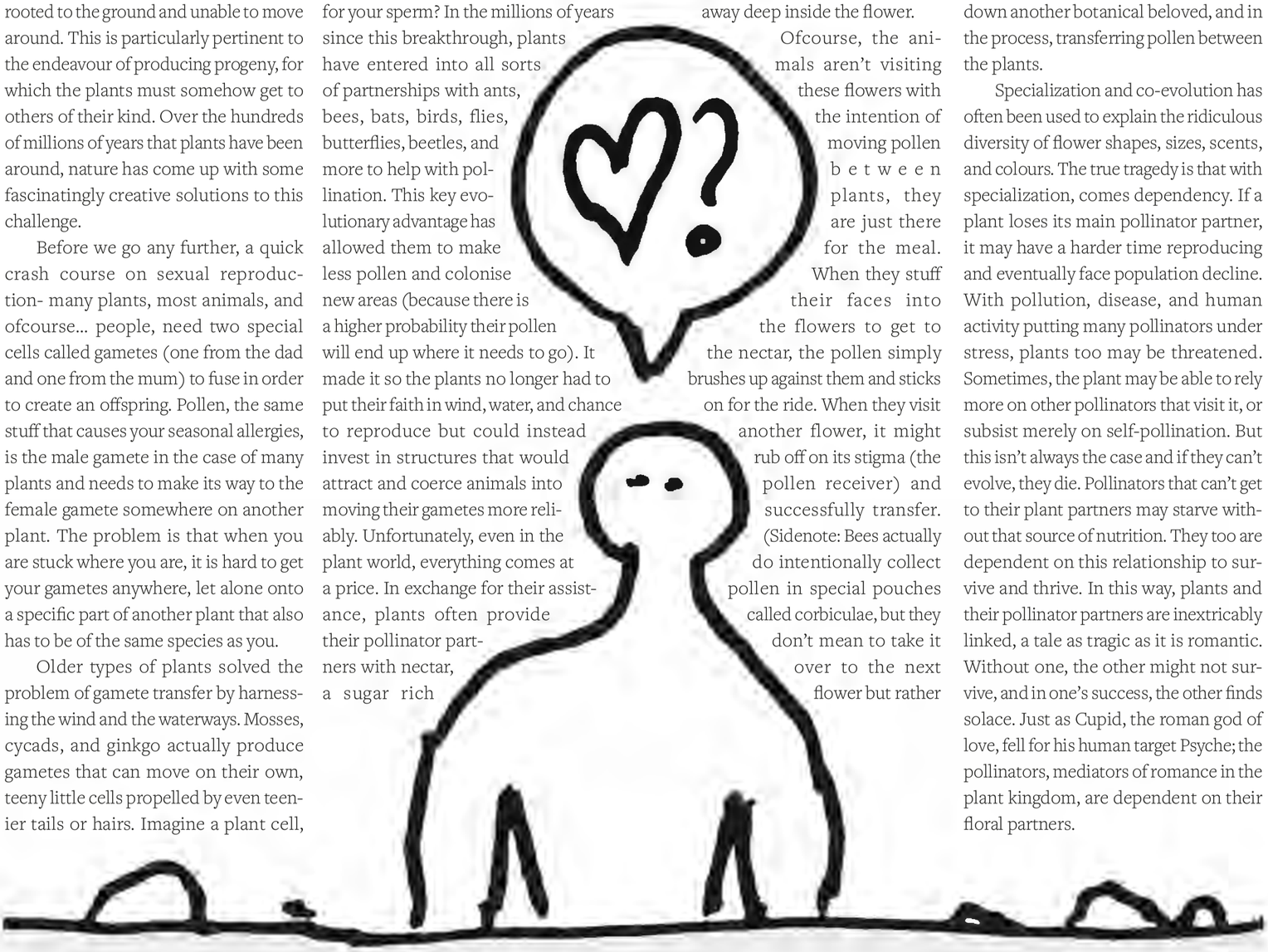
The true innovation in plant reproduction came about in the flowering plants, aka angiosperms. Through evolutionary trial and error, they figured out how to hire animals that are able to move, to carry their pollen for them, sort of like an express delivery service... for your sperm? In the millions of years since this breakthrough, plants have entered into all sorts of partnerships with ants, bees, bats, birds, flies, butterflies, beetles, and more to help with pollination. This key evolutionary advantage has allowed them to make less pollen and colonise new areas (because there is a higher probability their pollen will end up where it needs to go). It made it so the plants no longer had to put their faith in wind, water, and chance to reproduce but could instead invest in structures that would attract and coerce animals into moving their gametes more reliably. Unfortunately, even in the plant world, everything comes at a price. In exchange for their assistance, plants often provide their pollinator partners with nectar, a sugar rich food source, or even oils and fragrances. To let their potential visitors know that they are open for business, they advertise their presence with brightly coloured flowers and strong smells.

Different plant species specialise in attracting specific types of pollinators, evolving traits that are best suited to their partners. Plants pollinated by birds may provide spots for them to perch while interacting with the flowers. Flowers pollinated by bats or moths might only open at night time. Some flowers even have these little hidden markings, called nectar guides, that are only visible to bees (who can see UV light). These act as arrows or landing strips, guiding the visitors to the nectar which is hidden away deep inside the flower.

Ofcourse, the animals aren't visiting these flowers with the intention of moving pollen between plants, they are just there for the meal. When they stuff their faces into the flowers to get to the nectar, the pollen simply brushes up against them and sticks on for the ride. When they visit another flower, it might rub off on its stigma (the pollen receiver) and successfully transfer. (Sidenote: Bees actually do intentionally collect pollen in special pouches called corbiculae, but they don't mean to take it over to the next flower but rather bring it back to their hives and feed it to their babies!)

Some plants get sneaky and skip the whole nectar making thing altogether. Instead they entice and entrap their animal "partners" by posing as potential mates! This is called deceptive pollination and is common in many orchids pollinated by bees or wasps. Ready with their best pick-up lines, male insects fly over to these flowers that look and smell like females of their species. Then they tragically try to mate with these deceptions, only to find that the floral female is a fake, a facade. This strategy of catfishing your pollinator works because the male insects are hopeless romantics and are soon ready to be hurt again, chasing down another botanical beloved, and in the process, transferring pollen between the plants.

Specialization and co-evolution has often been used to explain the ridiculous diversity of flower shapes, sizes, scents, and colours. The true tragedy is that with specialization, comes dependency. If a plant loses its main pollinator partner, it may have a harder time reproducing and eventually face population decline. With pollution, disease, and human activity putting many pollinators under stress, plants too may be threatened. Sometimes, the plant may be able to rely more on other pollinators that visit it, or subsist merely on self-pollination. But this isn't always the case and if they can't evolve, they die. Pollinators that can't get to their plant partners may starve without that source of nutrition. They too are dependent on this relationship to survive and thrive. In this way, plants and their pollinator partners are inextricably linked, a tale as tragic as it is romantic. Without one, the other might not survive, and in one's success, the other finds solace. Just as Cupid, the roman god of love, fell for his human target Psyche; the pollinators, mediators of romance in the plant kingdom, are dependent on their floral partners.



Citations

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The half-life of love is forever

Mayumi Ramos
LOVE / ARTS & CULTURE

Part 1: ***Do you remember how it felt to be young and in love?***

Deana Lawson's 2009 photograph *Binky and Tony Forever* is a portrait of young love in all its glory. "There was something about their names [...] that I felt was a great coupling," Lawson says. "It represented young love without actually saying it." The title conjures up vivid images: names carved into a tree trunk, initials enclosed in a heart affectionately spray-painted onto a concrete wall. The singer Dev Hynes (also known as Blood Orange) used this photograph for the cover of his album *Freetown Sound*, which is how I was introduced to it. The artwork's recontextualization as an album cover demonstrates its power; it has the ability to go beyond the high art world and be accessed by a wider audience.

Despite seeming like it merely portrays a scene of domestic mundanity, the photo's composition is imbued with a certain grandeur, while still conjuring an instant sense of familiarity and nostalgia. This speaks to Deana Lawson's discerning eye and artistic genius: not only does she curate the elements and stage the scene in such a way that still feels candid and organic, but she also captures it evocatively — even though you aren't Binky or Tony, the tenderness they display conjures up similar feelings and memories.

Although this photograph was taken in Lawson's bedroom, it feels like Binky's domain. She's the centrepiece of the photo; it's her space, her gaze, her lover. Traces of femininity can be detected throughout the room — bottles of nail polish in various shades of pink, yellow flowers carefully placed in a glass bottle, gauzy mint green curtains, the bedspread's delicate lace trim — yet the heavy chartreuse colour overpowers the photo. Binky's femininity is undoubtedly present, but she uses it for power rather than submission: her lover, with tenderly closed eyes, rendered nearly helpless in her arms; her standing over him despite her diminutive height; and the intoxicating stare she shoots at you, almost making you feel like you're interrupting something.

Young love is intense, but it's often ephemeral. Nevertheless, when you experience it, something permanent happens to you. Does your first love ever really go away, or do you eventually just learn to manage it? There's an especially poignant line in Junot Díaz's short story "The Cheater's Guide to Love" that answers that question: "The half-life of love is forever." The graffiti may be scrubbed away, but if you look closely, you can still see its faint outline. Just like the love it represents, this portrait is transient — a fleeting moment in time. But it's bigger than that. It serves as a template for intimacy, longing, and adoration, a visual adage that perfectly encapsulates the timeless, lingering feeling of being young and in love.

Deana Lawson, "Binky and Tony Forever," 2009.

Part 2: ***How do you find love, and how do you make it last?***

How do you find love, and how do you make it last? "The Cheater's Guide to Love," a short story by Dominican-American writer and professor Junot Díaz, tries to answer just that. It's an intimate and unflinchingly candid exploration of personal shortcomings, character flaws, and the difficulty of reconciling the impulse to self-destruct with the complex, intense feelings of guilt and isolation.

The very first paragraph reveals the reason why Yunior, the narrator, and his long-term fiancée broke up: she found out that he had cheated on her with 50 (!!!) different women over the course of their six-year relationship. The story is divided into six sections, with each one recounting a different year of Yunior's life immediately following the breakup and detailing his physical, mental, and emotional collapse. It highlights Yunior's often futile attempts to curb his propensity for infidelity and mendacity, as well as his Murakami-esque attitudes towards women: Yunior is unable — or worse, unwilling — to imagine them as fully human. For example, the fiancée is represented almost entirely by her absence in his life, and the reader only gets to know her through the occasional glimpses of Yunior's enduring attachment, rendering her a vague and nebulous concept. Over the course of the narrative, Yunior grows increasingly frustrated by his inability to maintain romantic relationships, even though he's nearly always the reason for their demise. He craves intimacy intensely, yet he behaves in a way that sabotages any effort to achieve it (i.e. reveling in his sexual freedom and remaining emotionally detached).

Díaz is a master of subtlety — close and careful reading is necessary to glean clues about Yunior's success. He's a published writer and a Harvard professor, but these details aren't explicitly divulged — for the most part, you're only told about his misdeeds, personal failings, and all the ways that he screws up. Despite this, Díaz doesn't try to make you feel any particular way about him; his characterization is realistic and forthcoming rather than overly moralistic or sentimental. Yes, Yunior does shitty things, but still, you can't help but root for him. You can tell he wants to change, and you want to witness his escape from the downward spiral, even if you recognize that his misery is almost entirely his own doing. This almost irrational attachment to the protagonist is largely the result of Díaz's use of second-person narration: Yunior is talking about himself to himself, and the reader fills that role, making his transgressions and emotions feel as if they were your own.

Another interesting technical aspect is Díaz's choice to forgo translation or even italicization of the Spanish, which conveys a fluidity between the two languages in the narrator's mind. Although one might think this choice would alienate the reader, it has the effect of putting you in Yunior's head. He also doesn't use quotation marks in dialogue, implying a fluid relationship between thought, words, and action — and, since the stories are recollections, the imprecision of memory.

In the story, his ex-fiancée discovers his infidelities by snooping through his emails. It's an apt symbol for what it feels like to read this short story — you know it's fiction, but you can't escape the feeling that you're spying on someone's journal and their most secret, private, and embarrassing thoughts, or even hearing their confession. The similarities between Díaz and the main character make you wonder how fictional this story really is, and which parts he takes directly from his own life — *is* this a confession?

There is no definitive lesson in this story — it isn't trying to be a cautionary tale, and that nuance and ambiguity are precisely what makes it so perceptive. Near the end, Yunior finally faces his wrongdoings and guilt and displays a newfound self-awareness, offering the reader a faint but undeniable sense of hope. *"The half-life of love is forever,"* he scribbles in a notebook, beside his ex's name. Perhaps that aphorism sums up the moral of the story: you may not be able to get the love you once held for someone completely out of your system, but you'll eventually accept its permanence and learn to live with it. And — if nothing else — it's a start.

Illustration by Jeffery Decoster

It takes a while. You see the tall girl. You go to more doctors. You celebrate Arlenny's Ph.D. defense. And then, one June night, you scribble the ex's name and: The half-life of love is forever.

You bust out a couple more things. Then you put your head down.

The next day, you look at the new pages. For once, you don't want to burn them or give up writing forever.

It's a start, you say to the room.

That's about it. In the months that follow, you bend to the work, because it feels like hope, like grace—and because you know in your lying cheater's heart that sometimes a start is all we ever get.

The Ultimate Hear-Me-Out List

Meixuan Fan

LOVE / ARTS & CULTURE

As a lesbian, I watch most trending men pass me by. I can't say they're not conventionally attractive, but very rarely will I find myself clicking 'Read more' to find out more about them. However, one recent trend has caught my attention: hear-me-out cakes. Done alone or with friends, every person picks a couple of unconventional characters (whether they're human, anthropomorphic, or neither), prints them out, and sticks them on a cake, before they're given the opportunity to defend why they are attracted to this victim in particular. In an attempt to keep this somewhat relatable and non-controversial, I've created a list of male fictional characters that are appealing to me that I've had to defend on a multitude of occasions.

Let the trials begin! (The following list is not in any particular order.)

1. Optimus Prime (*Transformers*)

Starting off the list strong with a conventionally attractive character is Optimus Prime. Convince me not to like him for his noble, self-sacrificing character and his deep voice; spoiler alert, you can't. Not only is he thoughtful and well-spoken, but he also has a seriously cool transforming sequence (if you haven't seen it, go watch it). The Internet also describes him as having an "undying commitment" to peace and compassion, which is just a perfect blend in a partner. The last born of the original Thirteen Transformers, Optimus Prime is a crucial cornerstone of the *Transformers* franchise. He seems like a sweet guy to take on a romantic walk by the beach in the evening with only the seagulls and the waves for your company. Also, robots, anyone?

2. Venom (*Venom*)

If I'm honest, I've yet to see a hear-me-out cake that doesn't have Venom yet. I'm not exactly sure what that says about us, but I can't say he's a bad choice. He's ambitious, willing to pursue his goals at any cost (which clearly means he's committed and a natural go-getter), and openly speaks about anything that pleases him (meaning he's honest and open to communication). What's not to love? (He also has an impressive tongue, which really enables you to have *deep* and *thoughtful* conversations with him.)

3. The Magic Carpet (*Aladdin*)

A bit of an odd choice, I'm sure, but the magic carpet in Aladdin is kind, trustworthy, and undeniably loyal. Carpet, made by a magical sorcerer a thousand years before the story of *Aladdin* happens, is incredibly pure of heart and able to play around with his friends around him. Throughout Aladdin's entire journey to woo Jasmine, he's right there beside them, whether to bring them on a sightseeing romantic carpet ride or to uncover Jafar's ruses and save them from danger. In terms of sidekicks, he's just the right type of guy (carpet?) I'd pick to be by my side and go on a romantic carpet ride with.

4. Gill (*Finding Nemo*)

I know what you're thinking: he's a fish. And to that I say, so what? Though grim and angsty on the front, Gill is shown to be humorous (like when he plays volleyball with Bloat) and deeply passionate towards those he cares about, undyingly chasing freedom. He's a 'gangster' with a pure, soft heart, ultimately hardened by his circumstances and previous events. He cares for and wants to help Nemo, pushing him to succeed as best as he can, despite his own inability to escape.

5. Lord Shen (*Kung Fu Panda*)

Lord Shen, ever since his first appearance with his sweeping robes and immaculately white feathers, was mystifying for Child Me. He is prideful and yearns deeply to be 'superior.' He's beautiful, and the perfect violence-driven antagonist to Po's wit and compassion. And he's voiced by Gary Oldman, who was *also* my crush as Sirius Black, so what's not to love (outside of his glaringly wrong faults)?

6. Cadenza (the piano from *Beauty and the Beast*)

Before you say anything, I just want to point out that this is Stanley Tucci, okay? And if I had decided to make a celebrity list, Stanley Tucci would also be up there. For *sure*. So let's talk about Cadenza, who's the sweet husband to Madame de Garderobe in the live-action *Beauty and the Beast* and her piano accompaniment as she sings and performs. He is a lively, youthful, and humorous artist, challenging Cogsworth when he requests that he play quietly so as to not alert the Beast. He's sarcastic, naturally charming, and fights to see his wife again, showing his dedication to not only his perfected craft but also the love of his life. *J'adore!*

7. Anton Ego (*Ratatouille*)

Humbled after his first bite of the ratatouille Remy prepares in *Ratatouille*, Anton Ego, the famed "Grim Eater," is brought back to the familiar dish his mother used to make for him. He has high expectations for food and is highly knowledgeable on the subject. After Linguini opens up his new restaurant *La Ratatouille*, he is a changed man, choosing to finally believe Gusteau's slogan of 'Anyone can cook!' It's an oddly romantic notion to see him be compassionate and devoted to his craft, after finding that one can balance both kindness and ambition.

8. Julius Caesar (from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*)

"Et tu, Mei?" is what you're saying right now. All Shakespearean tragedies unveil their endings before they even begin, the one who ultimately dies is contained in the title. I can't really explain what draws me to Caesar from Shakespeare's play, but he is deeply complex as a tragic character, fostering turmoil in even his closest friend's heart. Perhaps it is not his character that is attractive, but the enriching and deep writing his character makes him out to be. Then fall (in love with me?), Caesar!

9. Red Hood (Jason Todd from DC)

My ultimate crush, and we should be grateful it's not an animal or an anthropomorphic being (or at least, that's what my friends say). Where to begin with Jason Todd? As Robin, he was admirably cheerful and determined, though he came from an austere background in comparison to both his predecessor (Dick Grayson) and successor (Tim Drake). He's fueled by his rage and morality, ultimately with the same goals as his adoptive father, Batman, but not by the same means. He's sharp, witty, and ambitious, realistically approaching his objectives with a solution that is functional though iron-willed. He has a good heart, wants to help others, and is deeply emotional though silent about it—making him an excellent partner, although it may take some time to coax him to be comfortable.

10. Garcia (*Red One*)

Hear me out? More like–*bear* me out. Yes, he's the bear, and no, I will be taking no further questions at this time. I figured an enigmatic but somewhat fitting character would be the perfect ending for this list. Garcia's a strong, witty, and empowering team member, dedicated to his job and E.L.F. If you haven't watched his interview, go ahead and do so. I know it's been somewhat wild and a little odd (maybe more than a little), but I hope that this diverse list has opened your eyes slightly to the world that awaits you out there.

The Doctor Is In

Walking you through when the condom breaks

Kiran Basra

LOVE / OPINION

Love is in the air, and as your (totally qualified) doctor, I am obliged to warn you about the myriad of infections and inconveniences that come along with it. This is not me being your creepy gym teacher lecturing you on abstinence, because it is your right to make decisions about what to do with your body. Also you wouldn't listen. But it is me telling you to be smart, and to think with your head instead of your... heart.

What to do if the condom breaks

And I am saying "if it breaks," not "if neither of you had a condom and you decided that you'd just go without one." Taking an emergency contraceptive is not harmful, but it is certainly not a pleasant experience. Some etiquette: the person who is not at risk of pregnancy is the one who a) goes out in the cold in the morning after to buy it and b) pays the $40 for one tiny pill surrounded by way too much packaging. In Ontario they are sold over-the-counter, so while you will have to ask a pharmacist in person, you will not have to provide any personal information and can choose to pay cash so there is no record of purchase.

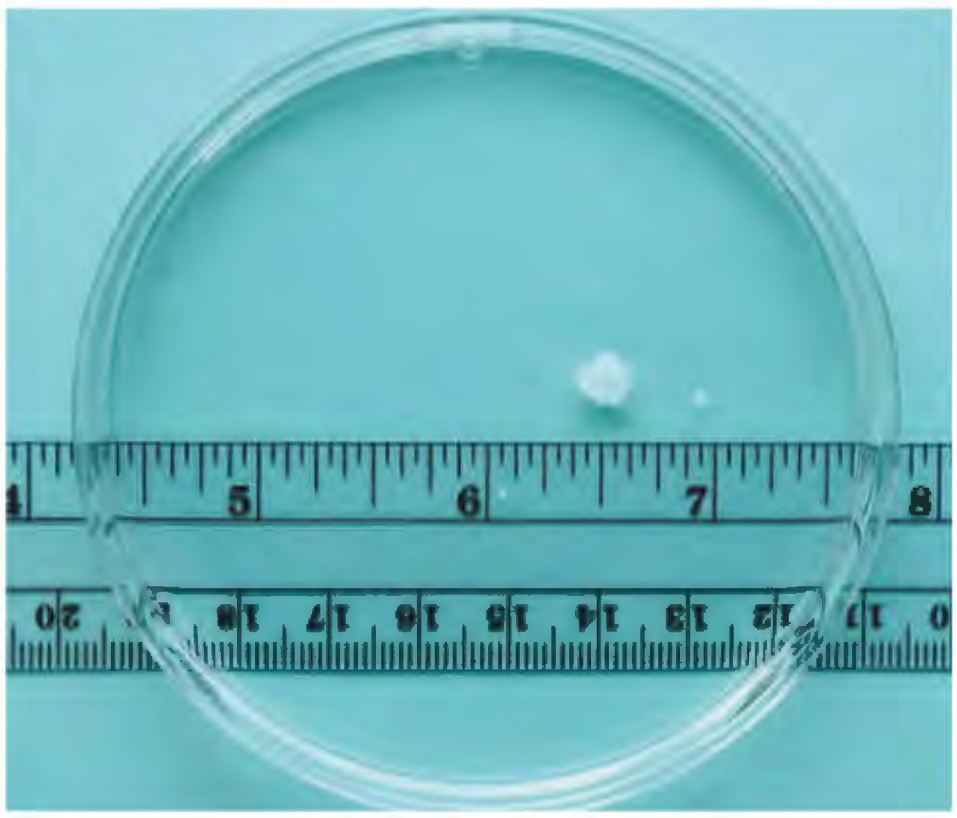
Plan B works by preventing ovulation and closing off the cervix. Once you take the pill, you will have a stomachache. You will be dizzy and nauseous. Your next period will be weird — prepare for it a few days ahead of time because it may be early, and stock up on your painkillers of choice. While Plan B is safe to use with any medication, be careful with mood-altering substances in the three or four days following it. Plan B can affect your tolerance; I've seen people who should be tipsy and relaxed turn blackout and paranoid.

If you were sleeping with someone who you don't know well, I'd also recommend going to get screened for any sexually transmitted infections. Better an afternoon and an inconvenience now than carrying syphilis around. If they don't call you back, that means you don't have any STIs.

Just in case

The sooner you take Plan B, the more effective it is — if you take it within 24 hours, 19 out of 20 times you have nothing to worry about. Still, Plan B does nothing if the sperm had already reached the egg before you took it, or the cervix didn't close early enough and some sperm made it past. If you skip your next period, or it looks strangely light, take a pregnancy test. You will not have to answer any questions and you can choose to pay cash so there will be no record. Buy two — occasionally, a test will be a dud and will not tell you whether or not you are pregnant. It will probably be negative, since you did everything right. If it isn't, call the Women's College Hospital.

Since you found out before 4 weeks gestation, the embryo is smaller than your fingernail right now. The pictures you see in pro-life propaganda are lies — an embryo of that age looks like a loose ball of cells less than one centimetre across, far from a fetus and even further from a real newborn.



Pregnancy tissue after 5 weeks Courtesy of MYA Network

Should you choose so, you will be provided with two pills. The first, mifepristone, will dilate your cervix to unattach the embryo from the wall of your uterus, cutting it off from nutrients. The second, misoprostol, will trigger a heavy period to flush it out of your body. Misoprostol is taken 24 hours later, at home, and is absolutely necessary. The embryo is already dead, and it is dangerous to leave it inside of you. Stay home for the next day — the embryo will be passed in the next 24 hours and you need to be close to a toilet when it happens, because there will be more blood than what you might expect on your average period. Cramps may be severe but they are normal and last about a day, though it is important to note here that your next period will be unpredictable. Additionally, should you decide an abortion isn't the choice for you, fertilized eggs are not harmed by Plan B so it will likely be viable, but you need to find an OB-GYN.

From campus, there are numerous places you can go for support. The Health and Wellness Centre at U of T (700 Bay, right across from Sick Kids) gives same-day appointments for sexual health. Women's College Hospital Bay Centre takes drop-in appointments, though you will have to wait a while (76 Grenville, between Queen's Park and College subway stations). Planned Parenthood Toronto needs you to book an appointment over the phone but is very careful about your email and often does not ask for a health card, permitting you to give a fake name (36B Prince Arthur, northeast of St. George subway station).

Easier Epistle #5

To my [esteemed colleague | dear friend | beloved partner | beloathed enemy],
CIRCLE ONE OPTION

On _____, _____ at ____ p.m., I would like to cordially invite you to
DAY OF WEEK, MONTH DATE

_____, to engage in the activity of _____.
LOCATION PREFERRED EUPHEMISM

I understand that this request may make you feel [confused | alarmed | aroused], but I implore you to consider it for the following reasons: SELECT ALL THAT APPLY AND MODIFY AS NECESSARY

- ☐ [my | your | our] [lack of] virginity is [not] important to [you | me | us]
- ☐ it is appropriate for [Valentine's | anti-Valentine's | midterm season | my emotional crisis]
- ☐ I am down so embarrassingly bad for you
- ☐ I will provide snacks

If you are amenable, I will see you at the aforementioned time and location. I will be the one wearing [little to no | a normal amount of | an excessively large amount of] clothes.

[Sincerely | Adoringly | Grudgingly | Boredly], _____

bianca eats

read this if you're too broke to go out for valentine's day

whether that be from lack of money or love

Bianca Mehrotra
FOOD

welcome back to bianca eats... as usual! your most favourite column where i trade my remaining sanity for your entertainment! this time, we're tackling valentine's day, the annual celebration of overpriced prix fixe menus and heart-shaped capitalism. but if you're too broke for all that (financially *or* emotionally), fear not. i have a recipe that'll make you forget you're single (or make your partner question why they're still paying for takeout).

yes, i'm back in the kitchen (no jokes need to be made here, please), cosplaying as your favourite celebrity chef (martha stewart!) with no michelin stars and probably even less dignity than last time. it's me, your resident academic martyr who will be providing you with the most perfect salmon and potatoes recipe, because nothing says "love" like fish and carbs (perfect for your make-out afterwards). who needs a fancy restaurant when you can create your own chaotic culinary magic at home? grab your apron, shed a tear (it's character-building), and let's make something that'll impress... even if it's just yourself.

SALMON TO DIE FOR

marinade recipe

- olive oil
- lemon juice
- garlic
- italian seasoning
- hot honey
- salt + pepper (to taste)

steps

1. mix marinade in a separate bowl
2. place salmon fillets in ziploc bag and pour marinade in (mix in the bag)
3. leave in fridge for at least 15 mins (can also leave in freezer for whenever)
4. once marinated, take out of bag and wrap the fillets in aluminum foil
5. place in air fryer at 400 degrees (fahrenheit) for about 10–15 mins—if you prefer oven or stovetop, you can do that here as well (pan fry for that crispy skin!)... but trust me, the best cook i have ever gotten on my salmon is in the air fryer!

and there you have it! vday dinner without the heartbreak or burning of holes in your bank account! remember, love is overrated, but eating your feelings never is!

happy valentine's day from me to you!

POTATOES FOR YOUR BEAUTIFUL GARLICKY BREATH

ingredients

- mini potatoes, diced into quarters
- olive oil
- garlic powder
- italian seasoning
- salt + pepper (to taste)

steps

1. chop potatoes and place in bowl
2. add olive oil, garlic powder, italian seasoning, salt, and pepper—mix until each piece is coated
3. place on lined tray (make sure each piece is spread out)—bake at 350 degrees fahrenheit for about 15 mins—i promise you will love these, but don't come kissing me after you eat these :)

Wanting and Waiting

Zachary Zanatta
LOVE / MUSIC

The funny thing about love is how much time is spent looking in instead of experiencing it. As much as love is constructed by shared time and intimacy, just as prevalent is a litany of ghostly silhouettes. Love is also one-way glances, missed opportunities, and scratched out love notes. It's the things that remind us of someone that often persist more than the person themselves. Yearning is what rises from these gaps, filling the empty space between would-be-lovers with confusing, passionate, blinding, and quiet longing. Where love is told in actions and words, yearning is all the things you can do, but simply haven't, or perhaps never will. Sometimes yearning is a constructed memory of what might have been, or a simple gift that you wish meant more than it did, or even the briefest of phone calls with a loved one imprisoned by a time difference. Here, yearning is eight brief and bittersweet songs not so much about love, but everything around it.

"One of Us Cannot Be Wrong" is about two people, but only heard by one. Leonard Cohen's devastating song patiently follows the trail of the lover he can never have. It's a desperate and anxious search for answers. Despite its best efforts to unlock the deep enigma of love, it's always stuck back at square one. Each new sage figure of wisdom the song introduces crumbles beneath Cohen's unrequited love. Cohen yearns like an analyst, his poetry concealing his restless and calculated pursuit of companionship. But "One of Us Cannot Be Wrong" holds no solutions. As it fades out, there's no sound of embrace, merely Cohen's frustrated wail as the fingerpicked guitar slowly extinguishes a love that never burned.

In "Concorde," yearning is anything but faceless. Here, it has a smile, pretty eyes, and a twinkly laugh. The abstract melts, now it's *his* dimples, *her* sense of humour, *their* soft voice. "Concorde" isn't searching for anyone, it's searching for *the* one. It's a want that's so profound it carves a space in your soul that functions not as a wound, but as a jigsaw puzzle, searching for the missing piece. The song reaches crushing climactic heights, the weary run to catch a mere glimpse of the person they hold so dear. However, true to its name, "Concorde" must fly. Despite it all, the highest mountain isn't tall enough. Just like that, the Concorde rockets past. The memory sears itself into the narrator's brain to remain immortal in his thoughts, but the sky returns to the same blue it always was.

However, yearning isn't always poetic theatrics. For every tear-stained love poem is an accompanying dirty thought. Sometimes, yearning is bitten lips, clenched fists, and flushed cheeks. In "I'm On Fire," Bruce Springsteen is not pining for puppy love. The song doesn't boast orchestral crescendos or passionate screams, it slithers like a lit spark along a never-ending fuse. The heart wants what the heart wants, and it wants it all. Springsteen doesn't merely yearn for coy confessions of affection; he yearns for skin on skin. His hushed delivery doesn't make his feelings any less grand, it just means the rest of it is hidden behind closed doors.

Sometimes yearning deteriorates from passive longing to destructive tendencies, and the vacuum of love starts to turn the wrong direction. In "Kettering," someone has poisoned the well. Yearning mutates into something toxic, something that clouds your vision and infects the soul. "Kettering" is haunting and fragile, it feels bruised before it even starts. It's small and alone against an imposing and vast landscape, soon to be engulfed by something wicked. Here, yearning is not merely pining, it's the desire for a sickly embrace. It will ravage you, hurt you, and kick you to the curb, but that's all for later. For now, you offer an open hand.

Yearning is not always a private act. It's a rogue feeling that flies untethered around your subconscious like a balloon in the wind. Sometimes it strikes when you least expect it—on the subway, in class, at a party—and it washes the world in a somber melancholy. Jeff Rosenstock's "All Blissed Out" is the fuzzy psychedelia of a lovelorn disruption. People and words dissolve into a muted soupy muck. Despite the commotion, Rosenstock is a lone and unaccompanied voice, hearing the laughter and ruckus from somewhere else. It's a hymn of gloom, a static hum that overwhelms the senses as reality fades into an impossible distance. Rosenstock's song feels like sinking underwater. Garbled snippets of conversation struggle to penetrate the deep blue and you sink lower into the inky black, left with nothing but you and the crushing pressure.

In contrast to Rosenstock's bleary chaos is the acute detail of "Alpha Incipiens" by the Mountain Goats. "Incipiens" recalls a memory with the accuracy of a photograph. Yearning possesses the unique ability to magnify every moment. The song hangs frozen in time between the narrator and the person he longs for. Seconds stretch into hours and minutiae blossom from background fodder into towering monuments. Despite the fluttery feeling of a crush, it also brings with it a punishing weight. Everything trivial becomes momentous. The world is seen through an exhaustive magnifying glass where each tiny movement has the capacity to shake the earth. Flashes of yearning aren't etched into memory with a fine point but seared with hot iron.

Sometimes lonely nights turn into lonely weeks, then into lonely months. The hardest part of romance is waiting. You wait for a change, a shapeless promise that something is bound to get better. You can't see your knight in shining armour, but you can feel their shadow. Yearning is the desperate clutching for a safety net, an SOS for someone to save you from the monotony. In "Maps," Karen O reaches for her saviour with outstretched hands. Her strained cry of "wait..." stands on shaky legs. Despite the song's triumphant thump of drums, her words come across as blind and broken. "Maps" explodes like a flare in the midst of a blizzard. It burns with all its might to be seen, but the cruel winter snuffs it out. It's a feeble spark that burns wildly against the dark but ultimately, it hardly makes a sound.

In "Palaces of Montezuma," Grinderman lead singer Nick Cave yearns with fiery eyes and a hungry soul. There is no room for misery here, only pure love. Cave cuts open his chest and rips out his bleeding heart as an offering to the person he loves, and ironically enough it doesn't seem to hurt. Yearning isn't a prison of wanting, it's a liberating experience of desire. Cave celebrates the privilege of yearning, the ability to realize your capacity to give is far greater than you could have ever imagined. It's an exuberant and amorous paean to unrequited love. Whether or not Cave's promises of palaces and gardens are reciprocated doesn't matter, it's his love to give. While yearning proves a frustrating and draining experience, it's also grandiose and beautiful. It feels sad and hard and confusing and flustering and wonderful all at once. But truly, how lucky we are to feel at all.

Tracklist

- "One of Us Cannot Be Wrong" – Leonard Cohen
- "Concorde" – Black Country, New Road
- "I'm On Fire" – Bruce Springsteen
- "Kettering" – The Antlers
- "All Blissed Out" – Jeff Rosenstock
- "Alpha Incipiens" – The Mountain Goats
- "Maps" – Yeah Yeah Yeahs
- "Palaces of Montezuma" – Grinderman

https://open.spotify.com/playlist/4N7OHNkkv7Q8f9DcdGAxtK

Creative works

A Field (of War)

I see here now, standing in
the midst of birch and gravelled roads
a field of war; a battle lost
fought long before my time.
The heroes of that fight here
still remain, though broken down,
dispersed through stream and soil.

I was made to fear the woods. My mind
exists to see behind each tree
the worst of what could come.
So why am I not pleased to see
the world around me tamed and made
to work?

I long for an untouched taste of sunlight
that might set my spirits straight. to glance upon
that overburdened stream of salmon,
struggling with life;
those song-infested woods
pitched high in pine, and incense of resin,
wherein the heron lays its weary head. to fight
against the trees as if
undying, trusting their return;
not for them, wishing that they were.

I could go west. So many have
before to fish and fell; but I admit
it would not be the same, to know that
only a few days away the spoils
of our victory lay waiting. to know that
what I find would pale in the sublime
of all that came before. to know that
nowhere in this world is left alone.

So here I am. left now, the victor,
standing in the midst of battles lost.
I know that no heart here remains alive
within these walls—the hall of this dead god.

— A.W. Jenkins

Celine, Come Out and Have a Cup of Coffee Together Today, I'm Going Back to Los Angeles Tomorrow

Dear Celine,
I received a text a while ago which I believe was a plea from a lover,
I trust you know who, and I would be sad to discover
That you let them leave without a cup of coffee together–
Yet I suppose I'll forever be stuck in the wheather.
Celine, were you afraid to let yourself be loved?
Is that why I received a text from your beloved?
Perhaps, in fear, you gave them my number
Instead of yours, and returned to your slumber
Never to see them again. Oh, the sorrow
Their heart must have faced when the fateful morrow
Rolled around and you were unaware that all they wanted
Was to have some coffee with you. They were probably so daunted
To send the text that ended up coming to me—
Oh, Celine, can't you see?
What if you let the love of your life slip through your fingers
Let their love for you just sit around and linger...
And what if you never love again?
What will you do then?
Or even worse, what if they never move on
And they believe the love of their life is gone?
Oh, but why do I really care?
It's not worth me pulling out my hair.
(But maybe the secret reason that I do
Is that I wonder if I will end up just like you:
Will I one day end up passing on some caffeine
Because I become afraid to love, like you, Celine?)
Anyways, Celine, whoever you are, I hope you didn't mess with fate,
And you let them love you before it was too late.

— Julia Pelitis

The Mural Project

Innis Residence Council (IRC)

Howdy friends! If you're an avid reader of *The Herald* (which you should be btw), you probably saw an ad from us a few months ago encouraging Innisians to submit designs for new murals in the Residence. We're happy to finally be able to share those designs with you now, along with the artists' statements that will accompany the selected mural designs. If you're interested in seeing more from the project, including photos of the final painted murals and the painting process, check out our Instagram @innisirc.

One last time, we'd like to give a massive thank you to everyone who submitted a design or otherwise helped with the project. We love you <3

xoxo,
The IRC

Cindy Lei

I wanted to honour my time in the Residence and the community I found here, so I created a design inspired by the view outside my Residence window. The warm lighting inside the room and the city view show how my residence room was a cozy home for me while I explored the possibilities at Toronto and U of T. The items on the windowsill refer to the community that I helped build in my time at Innis by running events, advocating for my peers, and fostering College spirit. In displaying this art on the Residence wall, I hope that future residents can find a sense of belonging here and make a positive impact on the Innis College community.

Michelle Zi Hui Wang

My design is inn-spired by the welcoming and warm culture at Innis that is truly out of this world. The bunnies in my design represent all Innisians, building a sky full of stars that bring light to the entire community. The scene depicts a story of guidance, learning, and growth, and features three constellations that reflect Innis culture: Hercules to represent bravery, Camelopardalis to represent adaptation, and Circinus to represent navigation and innovation. With this piece, I hope to remind Innisians that despite the daunting environment of new life phases, changes, and environments, we've got a steadfast community that has our back.

Mud

Ella Annis

1 I walked by a couple today. On the way back from dinner.
2 Oh?

1 They held each other's hands and had a small rat-looking dog walking beside them. The three of them combined took up most of the sidewalk. Most — but not all.
2 What are you getting at Dear? It's late. I'm too tired for stupid games.

1 They walked toward me and I needed to get by them. There was room. Perhaps just barely enough that I could have passed by without brushing their shoulders. So as we all walked towards each other I thought to myself. *Walk straight, just walk straight. You'll get by if you go straight.*
2 You're awfully dramatic today, aren't you.

1 See, I thought I'd do it, but as they got close to me — like right up to me, so close — my eyes darted to their clasped hands and I panicked. They were suddenly too much, it was all too much. Them being happy and close and together and perfect with their little rat dog and their hands! They were holding hands and it scared me so much that I would be too close to this... I don't know, this image of perfection and happiness. That they would turn around and hate me if I got too close and I couldn't— I took two steps to the side and passed them on the grass just off the sidewalk. Except... it wasn't grass. I looked down and it was mud. It wasn't even super deep or dirty mud, but... I felt like a fool. Like a dirty, insignificant, rodent. Hell, I was more of a rat than that stupid dog! That little bony creature owned its own space on the sidewalk, and I was standing in the mud... because I was weak.
2 ...Do your shoes need to be cleaned?

1 No. Do you not understand?
2 Quite frankly, you're scaring me. And no. I don't understand a thing. As always.

1 Answer me this. If I was that scared of happy people. What does that make me?
2 I think you're reading too much into this.
1 Stop thinking I'm crazy. I'm not! But think! I can't even remember the last time my hand was held.
2 Is... is this about me?

1 No. It's me. It's always me. I'm scared of being happy don't you see?
2 This is about me. Okay, so I don't make you happy? I don't hold your hand and walk down the streets with a dog, huh? So what? What are you getting—

1 I think I'm incapable of... shit.
2 What? Say it, damn it. What?

1 I don't know! I don't know I—
2 Just say it! Speak up!

1 It's— I can't! It's too horrible. I'm such a horrid person I can't—
2 Shut up. You're making such a big deal out of such a stupid thing and now you won't even finish your thought. You know how much of an attention seeker you're being?

1 Love.
2 What?

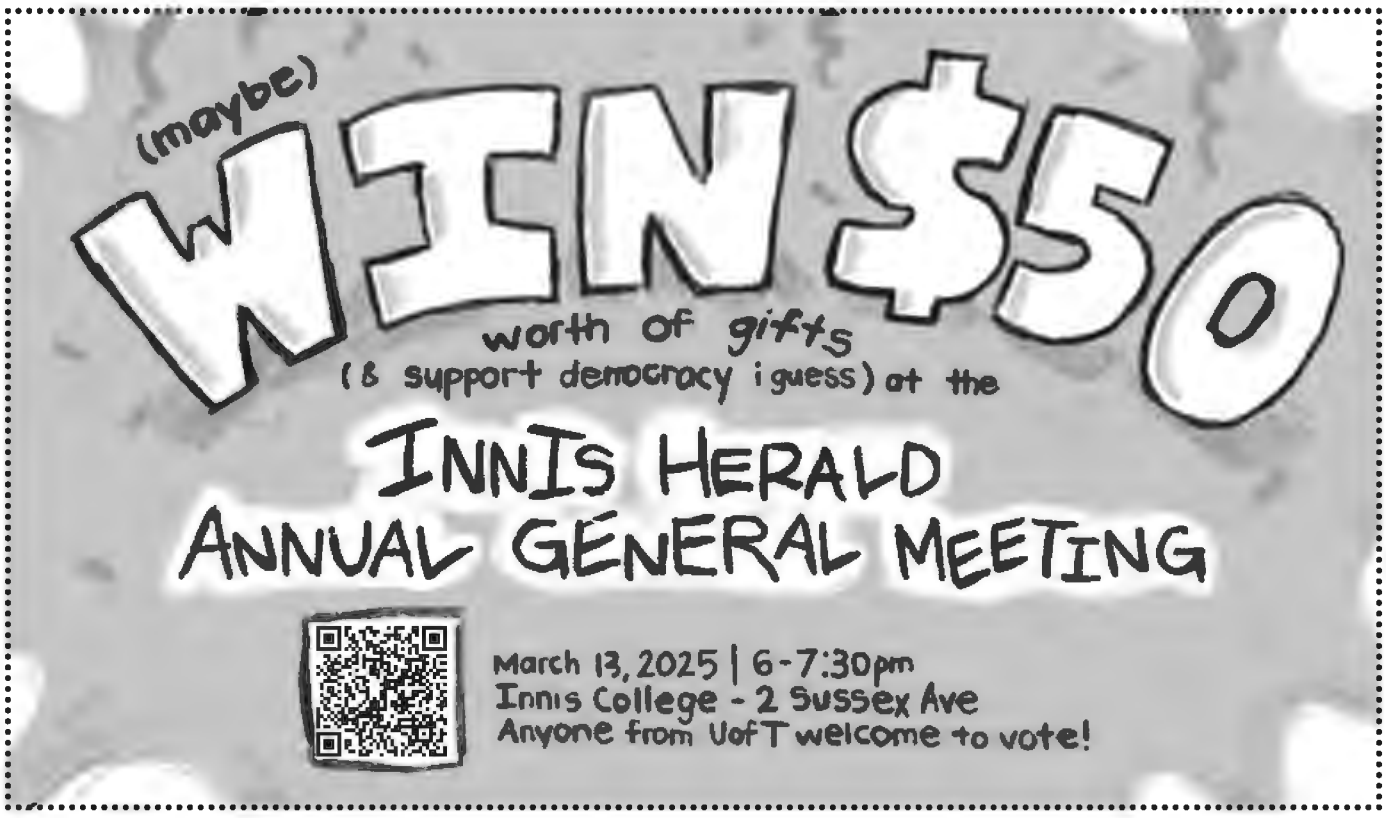
1 No. I think I'm incapable of love!
2 ... I think you should go to bed, you're talking bullshit again.

1 God... but if I can't love then...
2 You've been married for 3 years. What's this shit you're spewing now? You're with me and that's that. Love? That's for lonely single people. What, you, lonely? You wanna go find some other man who's gonna make you feel better? Like hell you are. Shut up and lie down.

1 Right. Yeah. I'll just go brush my teeth and stuff. Be back.
2 Don't be noisy. I'm sleeping now.

1 Okay. Goodnight.

The End



Walls

Jai Mann

Don't you know that I love you. I wish I could show it. I wish my voice didn't fall flat. It's hard for you to hear over my walls. I need you to know that I love you, even if you struggle to believe that.

Please don't go. I can see in your eyes that you feel alone, but I'm right here, even if you don't count that so. I wish I could prove to you that my heart is full. You are sitting still, but your mind has left. Tonight we were supposed to celebrate. I even brought us cake. I painted the walls yellow today, but I can change the colour if you don't like it that way?

Can't you come home. I know where you've gone. You stand still and all alone. I would call out to you, but is that of use? Your eyes reflect the river's bay. I can tell you're drowning; the salt water is coming down your face. When you speak, there is saltiness in your voice, a harsh cold. I know you don't mean it to be so.

I want to break through, I want to be with you. I want to be sincere. I want to be there. My mind reels when I think of you. I can feel my heart in my mouth, beating in my ears. We spent so much time close, yet so far away.

Why can't my words bring you home?

I wish you'd hear me over my walls so tall.

It feels like I'm screaming, but you say my face is still the same stone cold.

You say that you wish I could just open up to you, but there is no door.

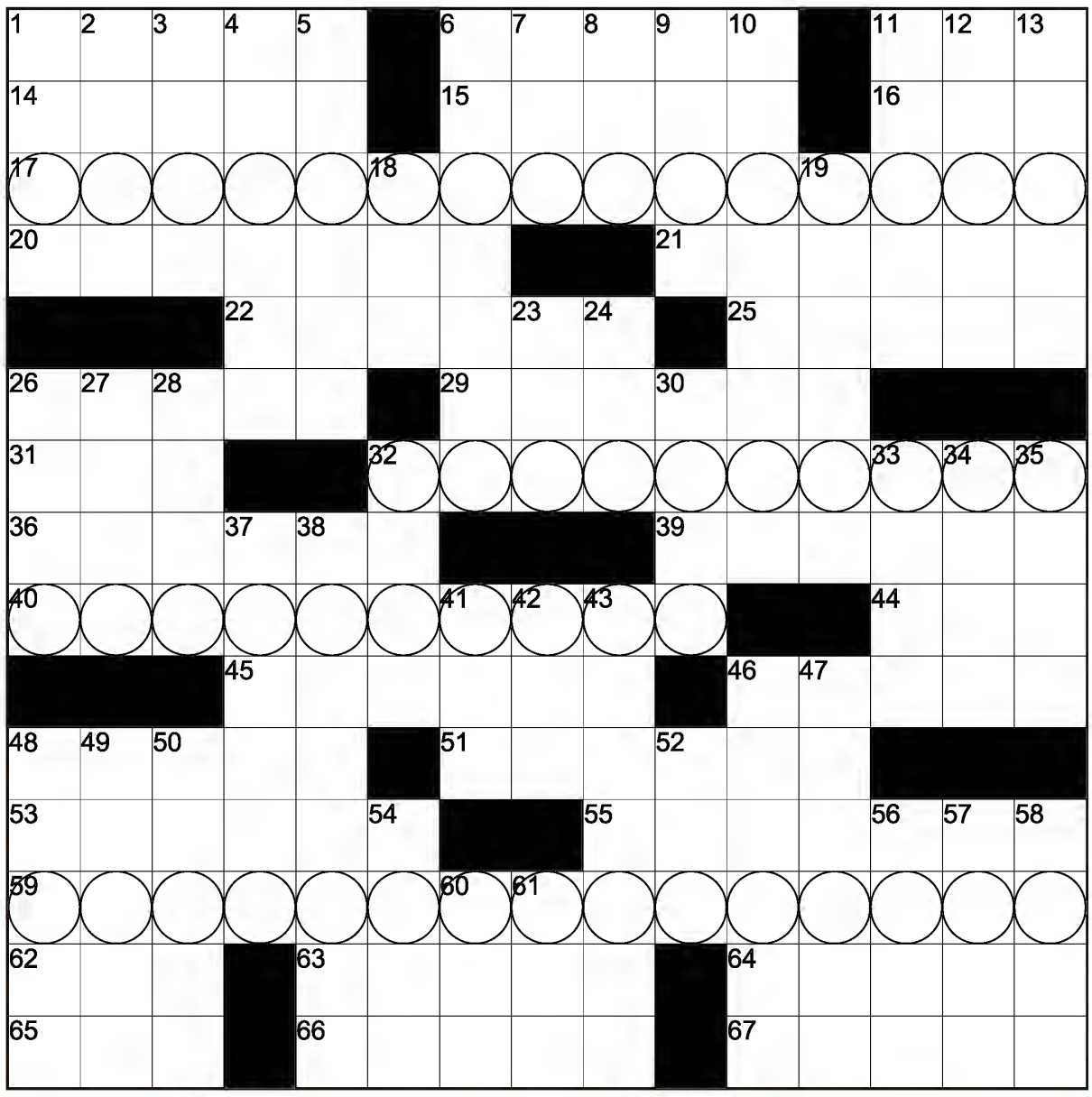
The wall's paint looks worn and drab. You lean your soaked self against it. I wish I could comfort you, that I could push through. Though, in the end, what has a wish gotten anyone besides being stuck with false hope of change? I don't want to live that way.

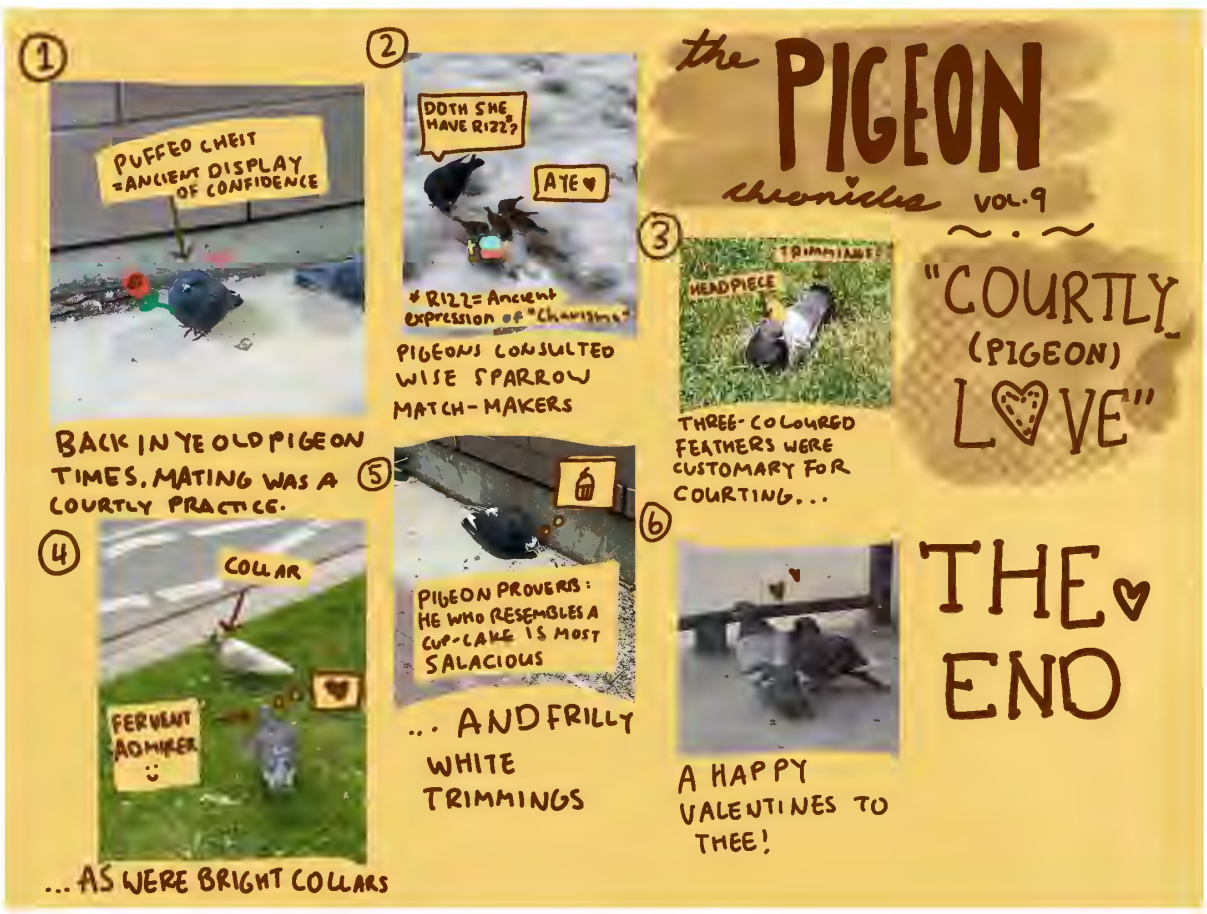
The wall is too thick to break down with a kick, too high to expect you or me to climb. The bricks are held together with paste, yet it's been laid out to waste. The erosion from the ocean spilling from your head caused the bricks to loosen their bonds. I pushed and shook till I found a weak link. In person, I sat by your side, hand on your shoulder. In my heart, I used all my might to push the brick to make a hole big enough to let us get just a glimpse of the other.

You took notice. In person, you placed your head on my shoulder and held me close. In my heart, you found my efforts and with wet hands, you pulled on the other side. Through the hole we saw each other weak, but it was the first time either of us could breathe. A window of hope that we can start with, that we could reach through.

Jeopardy

by Rick Lu




PUFFED CHEST = ANCIENT DISPLAY OF CONFIDENCE
DOTH SHE HAVE RIZZ?
AYE
* RIZZ = Ancient expression of "Charisma"
the PIGEON chronicles VOL. 9
"COURTLY (PIGEON) LOVE"
BACK IN YE OLD PIGEON TIMES, MATING WAS A COURTLY PRACTICE.
PIGEONS CONSULTED WISE SPARROW MATCH-MAKERS
HEADPIECE
TRIMMINGS
THREE-COLOURED FEATHERS WERE CUSTOMARY FOR COURTING...
COLLAR
FERVENT ADMIRER
PIGEON PROVERB: HE WHO RESEMBLES A CUP-CAKE IS MOST SALACIOUS
... AND FRILLY WHITE TRIMMINGS
A HAPPY VALENTINES TO THEE!
THE END
... AS WERE BRIGHT COLLARS

ACROSS

1 Italian drink
6 Music speeds
11 Clean Air Act org.
14 Land units
15 Elite group
16 What apples a day keep away (abbr.)
17 This scholar is thought to be the origin of the word "Eureka!"
20 Sum of pros and cons
21 "Jeez _____"
22 Eagle nests
25 Put clothes on
26 James and Sean of "Guardians of the Galaxy"
29 Sound system
31 "Huh?"
32 General San Martín proclaimed the independence of this country from Spain in 1821
36 Scuffle
39 Grief has five of them
40 One of the seven quantities with an SI unit, it is measured using caesium-133 atoms
44 $\int_0^\infty e^{-x}dx = \ ?$
45 Suitable for all ages
46 Flower locales
48 Beeper
51 Person from Kabul
53 Spanish grandmother
55 Bidder locale
59 This 1990 Christmas classic features a film within a film titled "Angels with Filthy Souls"
62 Negative prefix
63 Director Kurosawa
64 More recent
65 "No seats left" initials
66 Noodles that may be instant
67 Type of mill

DOWN

1 Type of dart
2 Soreness
3 Walk, as a horse
4 Model Chrissy
5 English major assessments
6 Dull
7 List-abbreviating letters
8 "Whatever."
9 Jack and Jill implement
10 Not decent
11 Actor Murphy of "Shrek"
12 Button action
13 Donkeys
18 One of the four elements
19 Jupiter moon
23 η
24 Collection
26 Highest grossing film when adjusted for inflation (abbr.)
27 "No you don't!"
28 Space org.
30 Dough action
32 Where the sun sets
33 Id counterparts
34 Philosopher Descartes
35 Functionalities
37 St George, for example
38 "_____, pants on fire!"
41 Leaf drink
42 Netanyahu's military org.
43 Capcom video game franchise featuring a character with a cannon arm
46 Not occupied
47 Deer headpiece
48 There are 16 _____ on a chess board
49 Loathe
50 Bat shit
52 Partner of saturation and brightness
54 "May I _____ favor?"
56 "_____ you one"
57 The clue whose answer is "LATTE"
58 A computer science major, for example
60 Third person male object pronoun
61 Mining objective

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ANSWER KEY